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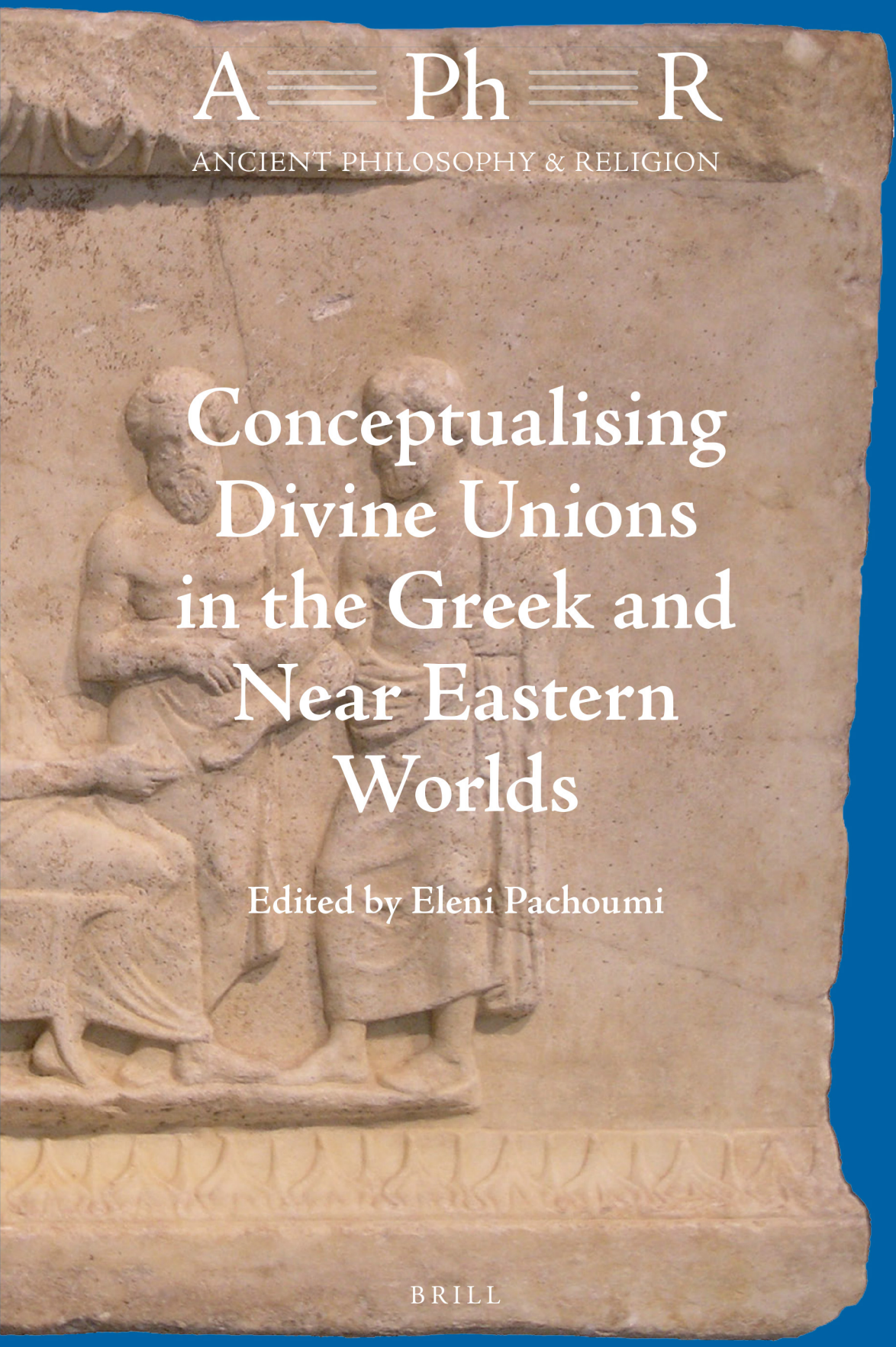

Conceptualising Divine Unions in the Greek and Near Eastern Worlds

Edited by Eleni Pachoumi

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Conceptualising Divine Unions in the Greek and Near Eastern Worlds

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Abbreviations

ARM	Archives Royales de Mari
ARM XXVI/1	Durand 1991
BCHP	*Babylonian Chronicle of the Hellenistic Period*. Forthcoming by Finkel and van der Spek.
BRM	Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan.
BRM II	Clay 1913
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.
Corp. Herm.	*Corpus Hermeticum*. In Arthur D. Nock and André-Jean Festugière (eds.). *Corpus Hermeticum*. 4 Vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945–1954.
CT	*Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*.
CTH	*Catalogue des Texts Hittites, by Emmanuel Laroche* (http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/CTH/).
DK	Hermann Diels. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Ed. Walther Kranz. 3 Vols. 6th ed. Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952.
DT	*Defixionum Tabellae*. In Auguste Audollent (ed.). *Defixionum Tabellae*. Paris: Minerva, 1904.
DTA	*Defixionum Tabellae Appendix*. In Richard Wünsch (ed.). *IG* (*Inscriptiones Graecae*). Vol. 3, Pars III: *Inscriptiones Atticae Aetatis Romanae: Appendix Defixionum Tabellae Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae*. Berlin: apud Georgium Reimerum, 1897.
IG	Julet Baillet (ed.). *Inscriptions grecques et latines des tombeaux ou syringes à Thèbes*. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1920–1926.
ILS	Dessau, Hermann (ed.). *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*. 3 Vols. Dublin: Apud Weidmannos, 1974.
KBo	Keilschrifttexte aus Boğazköy.
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boğazköy.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* II.1 Zürich-München: Artemis & Winkler Verlag, 1984.
LSJ	Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry S. Jones (eds.). *A Greek-English Lexicon with revised Supplement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex.
OCD	Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.). *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

OF	Alberto Bernabé. *Poetae Epici Graeci: Testimonia et Fragmenta*. Pars II Fasc. 1: *Orphicorum et Orphicis Similium Testimonia et Fragmenta*. Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2004.
OGI	Wilhelm Dittenberger (ed.). *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*. 2 Vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–1905.
PDM	*Papyri Demoticae Magicae*. In Hans D. Betz (ed.). *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completes. Series graecae*. Accurante Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Migne, 1.1857–166.1866.
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae*. In Karl Preisendanz (ed.). *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. 2 Vols. 2nd revised ed. With additions by Karl Preisendanz. Looked over and edited by Albert Henrichs. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–1974 (repr. Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001).
PLRE	Arnold H. M. Jones, John R. Martindale, and John Morris (eds.). *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. 3 Vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–1992.
P. Oxy.	*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1.1898ff.
PT	*Pyramid Texts*. In Raymond O. Faulkner. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
RIMA	*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*.
RIME	*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods*.
RINAP	*The Royal Inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian Period*.
SAA	*State Archives of Assyria*.
Suda	Ada Adler (ed.). *Sudae Lexicon*. 5 Vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–1938.
SM	*Supplementum Magicum*. In Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini (eds.). *Supplementum Magicum*. 2 Vols. Papyrologica Coloniensia 16.1–2. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–1992.

Introduction

Eleni Pachoumi

It has now become almost commonplace, thanks in part to Walter Burkert's *The Orientalizing Revolution* (1992) and Martin West's *The East Face of Helicon* (1997), to argue that the development of culture and thought of archaic Greece cannot be studied in isolation from the history of the neighbouring cultures, many of which were undergoing their own intellectual ferment. It is also a commonplace that religious life in the Roman world was strongly coloured by influences that were widely perceived, from that time to the present, to be in some sense "oriental." Nevertheless, few writings on the religious culture of antiquity have attempted to embrace the whole of the Mediterranean and middle Eastern world. Such a project would, of course, be vast, and this volume may be regarded as a series of overtures rather than as an attempt to cover the whole field in a single collaboration. The present volume consists of thirteen papers addressing the theme of *divine unions* from various interreligious and interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, according to each contributor's research expertise on Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Christian, Persian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Indian religion and literature.

The collection provides a systematic investigation and presentation in a single volume of an important but under-researched topic. A variety of papers investigates and contextualises various concepts of divine union in the private and public sphere of the Greek and Near Eastern worlds, focusing on human–divine interactions, intersection between kings and the divine, sexual unions with the divine, heroization and divinization rituals, divine epiphanies, mystic unions and assimilations with the divine, philosophical approaches for establishing union with the divine and theurgic unions with the divine. Some of the papers were presented at an international conference organised by the editor at North West University, 20–22 April 2017.

In the first part "Religion, Kingship and Politics" of the volume, the divine unions are addressed, examining the intersections between kings and the divine in Assyria, Babylonia, Achaemenid Iran, Egypt, and the Roman Empire. These studies, looking at divine kingship and the intersection between kings and the divine, approach the theme of divine union in terms of the status of certain political figures within society. Kings are "unified" with the "divine" insofar as they are considered, depicted, or treated as divine figures. In Mesopotamia in the first millennium BCE the divine union between monarchy and the divine is based on a relationship of dependence between each

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other; indications of the divine status of the king involve the royal divine aura (*melammu*), the statues of the kings in temples and the offerings to them. In Achaemenid Iran the intersection of gods and kings is analysed, assessing the validity of fourth-century BCE Greek ideas that the king was an image of god. In Ancient Egypt the dynamics of human–divine intersections (between worshipper and god) reach the level of identification with the divine. The role of the king as an intermediary between gods and men, is laid out in the first three chapters and taken up in the title of Edwards' chapter on how Christians subverted the tradition.

Philippe Clancier explores the divine status of the Mesopotamian king between gods and mankind in the first millennium BCE. The chapter examines the divine status of the king in Assyria and Babylonia, analysing the differences between them both, and their religious activities in their respective countries, focusing on their relationship and intersection with the gods (e.g., enthronement, divination, sacred marriages). The chapter also looks at the specific form of sacredness that the monarchy carried. This royal sacredness was expressed through radiance/aura, *melammu*, which made the king a separate human being but always dependent on the decision of the gods. The chapter also examines the evolution of the status of the king and their divinization from the end of the third to the first millennium BCE.

Christopher J. Tuplin examines the intersection of gods and kings in Achaemenid Iran. It has been something of a commonplace that the Persians did not see their king as a god, but that Greeks thought that they did. Perhaps this remains true. But there is a great deal of room for nuance on both sides, and it is the purpose of this chapter to explore some of that nuance. There has been recent scholarly flirtation with Achaemenid divine kingship. And there is little sign of an abatement in the discussion of a phenomenon that had a heavy impact on Greek ideas about the divine Persian king, while more generally the religious environment of the Achaemenid era is the object of energetic study. The chapter starts in Babylonia with a document of 485 BCE from Sippar about provision of cult for a statue of Darius. There are elements of novelty and political controversy in this document: they may conjecturally be associated with a more famous statue of Darius from Egypt, but, in any event, they are a reminder that the intersection between Achaemenid kings and the divine might be problematic not only for Greeks and that it was an area potentially open to manipulation in the new Persian imperial dispensation. The chapter then moves to material (non-Greek and Greek) that deals more directly with Persian attitudes in this area. The study lays out for inspection the strongest case that might be made for the fuzziness of the border between human and divine, where Achaemenid kings were concerned, and attempts, in particular,

to assess the validity of fourth-century Greek ideas that the king was an image of god and that a royal *daimōn* might be the object of worship or reverence. All such matters lie within a wider landscape of questions: e.g., the way that royal ideology was framed in public utterances, the discursive choices made in different media (iconographic and textual), the religious choices implicit in the selection of Ahuramazda against the background of a vividly polytheistic environment, and the extent of assimilation to or differentiation from traditional Mesopotamian representations of kingship. And what is at stake throughout is the character and degree of royal–divine union at the heart of the Achaemenid empire.

Robert K. Ritner discusses the dynamics of human and divine interactions in ancient Egypt. The distinctions between human and deity are not sharp in ancient Egypt, and the two categories frequently merge during formal religious ritual or private magical practice. The king, in particular, combines human and divine characteristics in his person during both life and death. For most non-royal individuals, however, true divine status becomes possible only with death and transfiguration on earth by funerary ritual and in the underworld by triumph over multiple obstacles, resulting in a judgment at the court of Osiris, god of the dead. After obtaining a successful verdict, the spirit of the deceased becomes an effective "limb" of the collective body of Osiris, fused with his identity, powers and privileges. Such a divine union is not limited to Osiris, and the deceased can claim equation with multiple traditional gods, sacred animals, plants and stars. Over half of the spells in the Book of the Dead declare a direct identity of the deceased, and his individual body parts, with gods, goddesses and divine epithets and powers. Most commonly, this equation is proclaimed with variations of the statement "I am God X," but Spell 137A summarizes the theological principle: "May the Osiris so-and-so live in his true nature, in his intrinsic form of a true god." The equation with deities is possible, because in Egyptian thought humankind was created from the essence of the creator himself, so that people are not categorically distinct from gods, but have divinity inherent within them. It is the knowledgeable who are able to recognize and utilize this force even while alive.

Expressions of unification between man and deities, and between the deities themselves, are a consistent and dominant feature of Egyptian religious literature from the earliest records (the *Pyramid Texts*) through the end of Egyptian religious traditions in Late Antiquity. The former practice is typically described as "deification," while the latter is often termed "syncretism." Both terms have been subject to scholarly dispute and attempts at refinement. Mark Smith (in the volume *Following Osiris* 2017) has declared most such unions illusory, limited to transient ritual or mythological contexts of little theolo-

gical significance. The chapter reviews the unbroken tradition of human and divine unifications in ancient Egypt, with a refutation of Smith's analysis and conclusions. Since humans contain inherent divinity in Egyptian theology, the relation between human and divine unifications is not one of sharp distinction but of comparability.

This notion of the king as an intermediary between gods and men is taken by Mark J. Edwards next, who looks at the Roman emperor Constantine and discusses his divine status as "god-man or man of god." Eusebius celebrates Constantine, both in the *Life of Constantine* and in his *Tricennial Oration*, as the all-seeing eye of God, his vicar on earth – in fact, a surrogate for Christ himself. Constantine may hint at a similar assimilation, when he designs a monument for himself in the midst of twelve apostles. Other language used in the *Oration to the Saints* also suggests the role of a vicegerent for God. His panegyrists also credit him with visions assuring him of divine patronage, and since the accounts cannot all describe the same event, we may reasonably suppose that it was characteristic of him to make such claims. All these visions in some way involve light, a favourite symbol in his *Oration to the Saints*, and an attempt to evoke the vision of Paul at Acts 26:13 may be suspected in Eusebius. Without taking the view that he actually saw a solar halo, these visions may be associated with Constantine's use of solar imagery on coins, with the pagan use of the sun as an emblem of divinity, with the solar cults imposed by certain of his predecessors, and with the imagery of Christ as sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2). By investigation of the relevant texts, it may be possible to ascertain whether Constantine pretends to more than a merely representative status in his embodiment of the divine will, perhaps arriving at an Israelite, or even Egyptian, notion of his relation to God that takes him well beyond the "orientalising" innovations of the Tetrarchy.

The next part "Religion, Sex and Mythology" explores sexual unions with the divine in the Greek and Near Eastern mythological traditions. The first study is a comparative examination of human–divine sexual unions in the Homeric and Hittite literary texts, revealing a cultural syncretism in the Eastern Mediterranean world during the Late Bronze Age. The sexual union between gods and mortals in Ancient Greece is also addressed in another study, assessing examples from Greek mythology and ritual.

Elias K. Petropoulos turns to a comparative examination between Greece and the Near East, examining the human–divine interactions and sexual unions in the Homeric, Hittite and other Near Eastern literary traditions. It has long been established that certain common elements and motifs can be traced between the *Iliad*, the Hittite and other Near Eastern literary texts. These documents, as well as important archaeological evidence, reveal an emerging com-

plicated cultural syncretism among the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean area during the Late Bronze Age; a process which apparently continued in later times. The chapter is focused on the relationship between human and divine, as well as on conceptualization of the divine, as described in various religious texts. On many occasions, certain myths, beliefs and heroes are transmitted by word of mouth, and then further adapted to the local needs and requirements of the traditions of the diverse peoples of the Aegean and, more broadly, the Near East. The chapter analyses and compares such examples from *Iliad*, the epic of Ullikummi, and other literary traditions of the peoples of the Caucasus.

Robert Parker examines the sexual union between gods and mortals in ancient Greece. Sexual unions between gods and mortal women (less often goddesses and mortal men) are a standard theme – and probably the best-known kind – of Greek myth, and occasionally Greek ritual. But philosophers and historians early raise doubts about the reality of such unions. This does not prevent different stories emerging whereby a few individuals (e.g., Plato, Alexander) have been sired by gods not in mythical but in contemporary time. The chapter discusses these traditions in relation to the problem of belief. However, firm beliefs about the nature of relations between men and gods prove hard to extract from this welter of stories about the distant past and rumours about exceptional individuals of the present.

The third part, "Religion, Philosophy and Ritual," explores the concept of divine intersection and union, focusing on religious, philosophical and ritualistic interactions. It is divided into three subsections: (a) Orphic heroization and divinization rituals, Platonic traditions and mystic rituals; (b) Neoplatonic theurgic unions; and (c) Stoic theology and the Christian thinkers.

Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui explores heroization and divinization in the so-called Orphic gold tablets (fourth-century BCE – second-century CE), which present a blessed afterlife for the initiates. However, the portrait that they offer is far from being homogeneous: some of them seem to depict a gradual process of heroization of the deceased, while others point to a sudden ontological leap which culminates in blunt deification. There are other tablets that seem to combine both models, and others that stay out of this dichotomy. The chapter analyses these differences and overlaps and some meaningful parallels that help to understand the role and place of these striking documents within the larger context of Greek religion.

Richard Seaford turns to a comparative examination of the union with the divine in Greece and India, focusing on the mysteries and monetisation. The study examines those passages of Plato (in *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*) that may be said to prefigure Neoplatonist ἕνωσις in that they describe as a kind of mystic initiation the close relationship of the invisible inner self

(*psyche*, *nous*) to invisible true Being – a phenomenon that is itself prefigured in Parmenides and even in Herakleitos. The close relationship is formulated by Plato in an interesting variety of ways, including *assimilation*. This leads to the question of what is contributed to the phenomenon by – respectively – mystery-cult and the socio-economic development underlying the idea (new in Plato) of an incorporeal comprehensive inner self (*psyche*). The chapter also compares the Indian idea of an incorporeal comprehensive inner self (*atman*) (new in the Upanishads), and its assimilation and identification with the universal principle denoted by *brahman*: particular attention is paid to the roles played respectively by the rite of passage and by socio-economic development.

Robert Vinkesteijn examines the concept of personal daimon in the Platonic tradition. *Daimon* is a notoriously ambiguous word, that comes to play an important role in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition. In Greek literature until the fourth-century BCE, it seems to have such an exceptional range of meaning that it could refer to: a specific divinity; something divine in a more undetermined sense; fate or destiny in a general sense; some individual's particular fate or curse; a spirit of some kind, either vengeful or beneficial, haunting or guarding; a spirit in the sense of the soul of a deceased hero or important individual. Remarkably, in the Platonic and philosophical tradition, this word comes to play an important role. Not only is the daimonic portrayed as mediator between the human and the divine, starting from Plato's *Symposium*, but our very own rational soul is identified as daimon by many ancient philosophers. Also, the daimonic is considered to play a crucial role with regard to the possibility of the philosophical life. The daimon, in other words, comes to be associated or even identified with the philosophical self, or the self in as far as it has philosophical potential. The chapter sets out the ways in which Plato develops the philosophical potential of the category of the daimonic, in three different ways: the daimonic sign of Socrates, the depiction of Socrates as a daimonic man and the daimon as a being mediating between the human and the divine, and finally, the notion of our rational soul as a daimon. It discusses the different meanings of the word in Plato's work, from Socrates' daimonic sign, via the daimonic as mediator in the *Symposium*, to the identification of our rational soul with a daimon in the *Timaeus*. What these various Platonic engagements with the daimonic have in common, is that they all contribute to the way philosophy itself is conceptualized. In Plato, philosophy is a daimonic enterprise. The chapter presents a more generalizing and systematizing attempt to understand, in particular, the way the notion of the daimonic is used to understand and develop *the philosophical self*. It argues that this notion enables the ancient philosophers to talk about the extent to

which our nature has the inner potential to be more than itself, to transgress the merely individual.

The next two contributions examine issues of divine epiphanies and theurgic unions in Proclus and other Neoplatonist philosophers. The Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus in his treatise *On the Hieratic Art* describes theurgy as an art combining Neoplatonic notions of mystic divine union with Egyptian ideas of divine identification and Chaldaean influences (e.g., the role of fire in the theurgic union); and analyses the stages of the theurgic union with the divine.

Robbert M. van den Berg analyses descriptions and discussions of divine epiphany by later Neoplatonists. Epiphanies mattered greatly to these last pagan philosophers, since these vindicated their most deeply held religious and metaphysical convictions at a time when Christianity had become the dominant religion. Taking their lead from, e.g., Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, the Neoplatonists thought of epiphanies first and foremost as encounters with perceivable manifestations of divine Beauty. Such an encounter brings about amazement (*thauma*) and confusion (*ekplêxis*) which forces the person who experiences it to turn away from the mundane to the divine. Since the gods themselves have no form, their presence (*parousia*) manifests itself in particular in works of art, such as beautiful statues and texts. In this way, the Neoplatonists link aesthetic theories to the religious practice of theurgy, which was all about attracting the divine, e.g., by rendering statues fit (*epitêdeios*) to receive the divine presence. The amazement and confusion that befalls the person who is exposed to a beautiful theurgic work of art confers this theurgical fitness upon that person, thus preparing him for further union with the divine.

Eleni Pachoumi examines the theurgic union of the individuals with the divine, looking at the final stages of theurgic unions according to Proclus' treatise *On the Hieratic Art*, and comparing them with other references in philosophy (e.g., the extracts from Proclus' *Chaldaean Philosophy*, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and the *Chaldaean Oracles*). Particular attention is paid to the association of these stages with the role of the divine light and fire in the divinisation of mortals. The chapter illustrates the concept of fire in the final stages of the theurgic union with examples from magico-theurgic texts, focusing on the philosophical and magical interactions reflected in the theurgic unions.

The final two chapters explore first the concept of divine intervention in Stoic theology in order to establish divine providence and justice to humans. Then it is examined how Christian theology adapted the Stoic image of fire and iron to understand their god. The Stoic 'iron and fire' metaphor, for example,

was used by the early Christian and Byzantine theologians to describe the union with God, *theôsis*.

Maarten van Houte examines the notion of divine intervention in Stoic theology, looking at the divine punishment as a way to establish divine providence and justice to humans. The Stoics' natural theology and deterministic world view do not seem to leave much room for the idea of God actively intervening in human affairs and inflicting impromptu punishment on criminals and impious people. Indeed, we find several Stoics reinterpreting divine punishment *more philosophico* in terms of wickedness (i.e., moral evil) being its own punishment, much in the same way many ancient philosophers regarded virtue as its own reward. There is evidence, however, that suggests that certain Stoics *did* in fact recognize what appears to be a more traditional form of divine punishment as well, viz. God 'intervening' in the cosmos in order to punish vicious people, e.g., by sending plagues and famine. The chapter tries to reconstruct how they conceptualized such god-inflicted punishment, and argues that they did so in order to emphasize God's providence and justice towards humans.

Dmitry Biriukov, then, analyses the Stoic 'iron and fire' example and the union with the divine in early Christian and Byzantine theology. The chapter looks at the Stoic 'iron and fire' metaphor for describing the union with God in Early Christian and Byzantine theology. The metaphor of fire heating iron is used as a way of talking about the interpenetration of divine and mortal bodies. The example of iron and fire as an illustration of the interpenetration of bodies originates in a Stoic doctrine. The Stoics gave this example along with a number of others for substantiating their teaching on total blending of bodies (differentiating it from conflation and composition). According to the Stoics, the total blending of bodies takes place, when a body receives certain qualities of another, while remaining, nevertheless, itself; or both the mixed bodies acquire the qualities of each other, preserving their own natures. The Stoic teaching of blending – whereby the mixed bodies retain their identity – was received and actively applied by the Christian authors. Like some other philosophical topics of great importance tied to theological intuitions, it first appeared in the writings of Origen, who illustrated the conjunction of Christ's soul with God with the example of the penetration of fire into iron. The further development of this topic by the Byzantine theologians comprised two principal lines presupposed in Origen's operating with this example: the Christological line, and that of *theôsis* of the human being. Generally, in Early Christian and Byzantine theological literature the example of fire and iron was usually applied within the narrative of two diverse natures interacting with each other, so that they form a unity in one way or another (in regard to the

hypostasis of Christ; and to powers, properties or energies for the other cases). Depending on their objectives, with this example some authors emphasized the difference of interacting natures, and thus activated the distinctiveness of the two natures, whereas others did the opposite way and employed their uniting potential. The chapter traces manifestations of these potentials in early Christian and Byzantine theology in the framework of both kind of response.

In other words, then, the theme of divine unions is first addressed examining the intersections between kings and the divine in Assyria, Babylonia and the Achaemenid Iran. These essays approach the divine union in terms of the status of certain political figures within society; kings are unified with the divine insofar as they are considered, or depicted as divine figures. This notion of the king as an intermediary between gods and men is also analysed in the examination of the human–divine figure of the Roman emperor Constantine. Then, another aspect of the theme is addressed, that of the sexual union between gods and mortals in archaic and classical Greece, assessing examples from Greek mythology and ritual. A comparative also examination of human–divine unions in the Homeric and Hittite literary texts reveals a cultural syncretism in the Eastern Mediterranean world during the Late Bronze Age. Finally, the religio-philosophical aspects of the theme are examined in the third part on religion, philosophy and ritual, which is divided into three subsections, discussing Platonic traditions, mystic rituals and theurgic practices, Orphic heroization and divinization rituals, Neoplatonism, Stoicism and Christian theology. In Late Antiquity complicated notions such as divine epiphanies, divine identification, internalisation of the divine and divinization became the focus of Neoplatonist philosophers, Christian thinkers, theurgists and magicians. And in their texts we do find more complete, mystic unions of the invisible inner self with the so-called invisible One, or God, or the divine.

Oxford, 2021

PART 1

Religion, Kingship and Politics

CHAPTER 1

The Mesopotamian King between Gods and Men in the First Millennium BCE

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1 Introduction

"After the kingship descended from heaven, the kingship was in Eridu." It is with these words that the Sumerian King List begins,[1] a text whose main copies date back to the beginning of the Old-Babylonian era (early second millennium), but whose oldest copy is from the end of the third millennium.[2] This text, like so many others, establishes an unambiguous link between the monarchy and the divine, since the former is an emanation of the latter. As monarchy descends from heaven, and the king is chosen by the deities, it appears that the institution is of divine right. The chapter deals with the issue of the divine union between monarchy and the divinities based on a relationship of dependence between each other.

The king's status has never ceased to evolve throughout the history of ancient Mesopotamia: from being the representative of the god on earth in charge of the management of his city-state; to being a kind of divinity at the end of the third millennium and at the very beginning of the second; to a unique human being, whose most mature theoretical expressions date from the first millennium.

On the other side, some gods have made a specialty of everything related to the granting of the title of the king. In the early periods it was mainly the role of Enlil, who was himself king of gods. Later, when Marduk also called Bēl ("Lord") took his place, he was assisted by his son Nabu who made the kings of Babylon. In Assyria the monarchy was conferred by the national god Aššur and the king was his vicar (*iššiakku*). Monarchs were indeed enthroned through priests,[3] but received their powers from the world of the gods. As such, they were not individuals like the others, because they were somewhere between

1 Glassner (1993) 138–142.

2 Steinkeller (2003).

3 This is particularly true in Babylon where the king was not an agent of the cult; Waerzeggers (2011) 731–733.

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the world of men and the divine. Moreover, after the creation of men in order to serve the gods, god Ea suggested modelling the beings destined to lead these new servants. These were of course kings who did not have exactly the same nature as the rest of mankind:[4]

> Ea (god of wisdom) opened his mouth to speak, saying a word to Belet-ili (goddess of creation): "You are Belet-ili, the sister of the great gods; it was you who created man, the human (*lullû amēlu*). Fashion now the king, the counsellor man (*šarru māliku amēlu*)! Gird the whole of his figure so pleasingly, make perfect his countenance and well formed his body!" And Belet-ili fashioned the king, the counsellor man. The great gods gave the king the (power in) battle; Anu gave him the crown; Enlil gave him the throne; Nergal gave him the weapons; Ninurta gave him glittering brilliance; Belet-ili gave him a beautiful appearance; Nusku gave instructions, gave advice *and was at his service*[?]. He who speaks lies and deceit to the king, if it's a … it will […].

In the first millennium BCE between the Sumerian King List and this text from Babylon[5] there is an apparent continuity of the Mesopotamians' idea of the origin of the monarchical institution and its relationship with the divinities. However, the concept of monarchy and in particular of a monarchy of divine right has been significantly transformed from the third millennium to the end of the first. But it is not a question here of retracing all the complex relationships between kings and gods from the first texts to the abandonment of the cuneiform script. The chapter will focus on the first millennium, by looking mainly at the Assyrian and Babylonian cases. However, there will be a reference in the beginning to some developments from the end of the third millennium to the first. The chapter will then examine the representations of kings and the power that was attributed to these images especially in the first millennium. This examination will illuminate the specific form of sacredness that the monarchy carried. The royal sacredness was expressed through radiance, *melammu*, which made the king a separate human being but always dependent on the decision of the gods. Finally, attention will be paid on how Babylonian scholars (*ummânu*) had to and were able to adapt their vision of

4 Text VAT 17019 (BE 13383), copy in *VS* 24, 92, Mayer (1987). The first lines are cited by Radner (2010) 27; for the rest, see Mayer (1987) 56–58.

5 Mayer (1987) 55. This tablet is nowadays in Berlin. It was unearthed with several scholarly texts in the northeast of the temple of Ninurta in Babylon; see for its exact location Pedersén (2005) 259.

a sacred monarchy to kings culturally exogenous to Mesopotamia after the Persian and then Greco-Macedonian conquests.

2 The King as a God in the Early Periods

The situation of the first millennium, which will be mainly examined here, is the result of a long evolution in the second half of the third millennium and the beginning of the second. These are periods for which the sources on this matter are relatively abundant.

The king's place between the gods and men caused some hesitations leading to a precise moment in the third millennium to tip the monarch into the world of the gods.[6] In the cuneiform writing the names of deities are preceded by a specific sign, a determinative, announcing that the following name is that of a god or goddess. This sign is a star that can be read AN, "the sky," but which in this case means "divinity" that is the Sumerian DINGIR.

During the second half of the third millennium and at the very beginning of the second, many kings saw their names preceded by this determinative, which sometimes makes us speak for example of "divine Šulgi,"[7] taking it as a parallel to the Roman tradition of the "divine Caesar." There are in fact two different scenarios: either the divine title was given after the death of the concerned king, or the monarch attributed it to himself during his life time. Naram-Sin (2254–2218), king of the city of Akkad during the period of the first great Mesopotamian empire, was the first to deify himself. He was represented with a horned helmet on his victory stele, which is now preserved in the Louvre (fig. 1.1). These horns are the sign of gods and their divine servants,[8] and a novelty for a king from the Akkad period (2334–2193).

The question is ultimately to determine the divine status of the Mesopotamian king from the late Early Bronze Age (2900–2000) and early Middle

6 We will leave aside the vast question of sacred marriage as a legitimization of royal power and a link with the world of the gods, because in the first millennium these are ceremonies involving divine statues, even if in the case of the marriage of Nabu and his wife Tašmetu the god "is identified with an aspect of the Mesopotamian king, namely with the crown prince"; Lapinkivi (2004) 81. We can follow Lapinkivi (2004) 84, saying: "At least one of the purposes of the ritual was to bless the king and the royal family." It is possible to consider the question of the sacred marriage in a synthetic way in the third millennium and more particularly in the reigns of Ur-Nammu and Šulgi, kings of Ur; Vacin (2011) 202–218; and in the first millennium, which is the focus of our attention here; Lapinkivi (2004) 81–91.

7 Šulgi is the second king of the Third Dynasty of the city of Ur. His reign took place between 2094 and 2047.

8 For a short introduction to the horned cap of the gods, see Black and Green (1992) 102.

FIGURE 1.1
Stele of Naram-Sin (detail)

Bronze Age (2000–1600). It is a rather complicated question that must be compared to the practice of ancestors' worship[9] and royal worship.[10] The cult of ancestors was periodically worshipped by prominent members of the family – royal or otherwise – to promote the well-being of the dead and their kindness towards the living, and to prevent them from returning to haunt them. Kings or members of their families worshipped their ancestors through ritual libations and meals – sometimes they appropriated it, since it was possible to worship prestigious kings of other families. There is a fine example of worship of dead kings reported in the so-called "Autobiography of Adad-guppi," the mother of Nabonidus (556–539), the last king of Babylon:[11]

> Afterwards, they (Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar) died. Nobody among their sons and nobody [among] their people or their high officials, whose possessions and properties they had increased when they had exalted [them], burnt incense for them. I, every month without cease, (dressed

9 For an approach of this very complex question for the Old-Babylonian period, see Jacquet (2012) and for a more diachronic approach, Niehr, Pernicka, Pfälzner and Wissing 2012. Without going into details that would take us too far from our subject, we can establish a difference between the ancestors' cult that concerns the members of the family (even when the relationship is fictional) and the royal cult, provided by the clergy, which is not in the private and family sphere.

10 This question was also studied by Waerzeggers (2014) for the Achaemenid period, and by Linssen (2004) 124–128 for the Hellenistic times [on that matter, see the recent article of Spek (2016) with earlier bibliographical references].

11 Beaulieu (1989) 78. For other translations, cf. Schaudig (2001) 500–510 and Lafont, Tenu, Joannès and Clancier (2017) 819.

> in) my fine garments, performed for them all the funerary offerings: [oxen], fattened sheep, bread, first quality beer, [wine], oil, honey, and fruits. I established for them regular abundant offerings of incense of pleasing scent, and I always sent them in their presence.

An important element could integrate the ritual: the statues. For example, German archaeologists have discovered two statues at the entrance of the tomb of the kings of the Syrian city of Qatna.[12] They played a role in the ceremonies of homage to the dead of the royal family, although it is not clear which one.

3 The Royal Images

3.1 *Royal Statues in Temples in the Third and Second Millennia*

However, there is another type of statue or stele that brings the king closer to a god. These are the statues of kings erected in shrines sometimes next to the deities of the pantheon. In addition to the fact that their role as orant should not be neglected, these statues emphasised the place of the king appointed by the gods to lead men. This place made the monarch being apart from other humans. Such images are documented from the third millennium to the Parthian period.[13] There is therefore a definite continuity here.

For the period of the Ancient Bronze Age and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, we are informed from the texts about statues erected in the city of Lagaš, such as those to King Ur-Nanše (ca. 2520) and Lugalanda and his wife Barnamtara; later in Ur to the kings of Akkad Sargon (2334–2279), Maništušu (2269–2255) and Naram-Sin (2254–2218) and, of course, for the kings of the city itself, such as Ur-Namma (2112–2095), Šulgi (2094–2047), Amar-Sin (2046–2038), Šu-Sin (2037–2029) and Ibbi-Sin (2028–2004). There are also many more. This practice continued during the Old-Babylonian period, since the year names, which used to date the texts explicitly and regularly, refer to the royal statues installed in the temples. This is related to the kings of Isin who continued the tradition of divinization, but also to the monarchs who have abandoned this use, such as those of the first dynasty of Babylon or Mari. The statues of the most memorable kings of the third millennium –

12 Pfälzner (2010).

13 For the food offerings before the statue of the king during the Parthian period, see *Babylonian Chronicle of the Hellenistic Period* 18, A.15: https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/bchp-18b-a-chronographic-document-concerning-bagayasha-b-a/.

or at least considered as such – like those of Sargon or Naram-Sin were also venerated.[14]

At the beginning of the second millennium there was a clear evolution of the royal status. Kings lost the custom of being deified during their lifetime or deifying their ancestors. This practice persisted a little longer in Isin, as mentioned, but that is because the dynasty wanted to be the heir of the Ur empire (2112–2004). It must be hardly anything more than an archaism.

Royal statues throughout the periods received offerings that brought them closer to divine statues, but also played the role of an orant, which is an object placed before the eyes of the deities to perpetually attract the blessings of the divinities. We can therefore see through these objects the king's place between two worlds; the king was both a sacred being and above all a servant of the gods. The documentation of the first millennium demonstrates the outcome of the developments that have just been pointed out.

3.2 *The Statues of the Kings of Assyria in the First Millennium*

In the first millennium in Assyria and Babylonia the king was no longer a god, but remained a person of sacred status who took him out from the world of men. This situation can be illustrated by three examples: (a) the statues of the Assyrian kings in temples; (b) the offerings made to them; and (c) the royal radiance (*melammu*).

The presence of numerous Assyrian royal statues in the Mesopotamian shrines is known not only from inscriptions but also from letters exchanged between the sovereign and his subjects. Kings were very interested in ensuring that their statues presented before the deities conformed to their desires. The letter *SAA* XIII, 178 is a response to a request from the King Esarhaddon (680–669), concerning his representation in Esagil, the great sanctuary of the god Bel-Marduk, the deity of Babylon. It is reported in this document that Esarhaddon had statues of him in front of Bel-Marduk, when the god was in exile in Aššur after his deportation by Sennacherib:[15]

14 For a rapid and useful sum up of this question, see Cole and Machinist (1998) XIII–XV with bibliography XXII–XXIII.

15 *SAA* XIII, 178, o. 10–25. Sennacherib, father of Esarhaddon, after several unsuccessful attempts to dominate Babylon took the city and destroyed it in 689. He deported part of the population and the statues of Bel-Marduk. Thus, this statue found itself in exile in Aššur. Esarhaddon decided to rebuild Babylon and bring Marduk back. The statue was only reinstalled under his son Aššurbanipal.

> The statues of the king which Mar-Issar[16] brought here, saying: "Inspect (them), and let the one which is perfect stand" – when the scholars (*ummânu*) and I,[17] (all) servants of the king, inspected (them) together, the very statue which I sent to the king, my lord, was perfect in that the king, my lord, is girding himself, and you(!) are entering before Marduk, your god; (this) is the very statue which I sent to the king, my lord. The arrangement of the clothing of the king, my lord, is just like that (of the statues) which they are setting up in Aššur upon the dais of Bel (and) I have set up in Esagil and the temples of Babylon. Let the king have a look; and if it pleases the king, my lord, let one exactly like his stand, or if it does not please the king, my lord, let the very statue of the king, my lord, which I sent, stand.

This letter is very interesting for several reasons. It shows that the king of Assyria had statues of himself in the temples of his country, as it is the case here with the temple of the god Aššur in the city of Aššur. However, the extension of the empire to Babylon also caused a dissemination of royal images, which undoubtedly functioned not only as attracting the good feelings of the deities to the monarchs, but also as ensuring the cohesion of the empire, and marking its limits.

These observations are reflected in the older inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727), when he reported the submission of Hanunu, the king of Gaza, to the southwestern end of the then Assyrian empire:[18]

> (As for) Hanunu of the city Gaza, [who] fle[d before] my weapons [and] escaped [to] Egypt – [I conquered] the city Gaza, [his royal city, (and) I carried off] his property (and) [his] gods.
>
> [I fashioned (a statue bearing) image(s) of the god]s, my [lo]rds, and my royal image [out of gold, erected (it) i]n the palace [of the city Gaza], (and) I reckoned (it) [am]ong the gods of their land; I established [their regular offerings (*sattukku*)].
>
> Moreover, [as for him (Hanunu), the terrifying brilliance (*nammurat Aššur*) of (the god) Aššur, my lord over]whelmed him and he flew (back) [from Egypt] like a bird and [...]. I returned him to his position.

16 Mar-Issar was a scholar of Esarhaddon and was one of his agents in Babylon. He had to ensure the proper functioning of everything concerning cults and gods there; Baker (2001) 739–740.

17 The letter *SAA* XIII, 178 was sent by Šuma-iddin to Esarhaddon. So Šuma-iddin is the one who speaks in the first person. For this character, see Baker (2011) 1292 5a.

18 *RINAP* 1, Tiglath-pileser III, 42, l. 8'–13'.

After the capture of Gaza by his army Tiglath-pileser III marked the city's integration into his empire not only through the submission of the local king, but also through the imposition of the gods of Aššur. That was not a religious war or a desire to convert Hanunu and its people to the gods of Assyria, but it rather aimed at bringing their power and will into this Western boundary of the empire. The images of the gods were not the only ones erected, since the king himself was represented there. It is sometimes implied that after a victory the erection of a statue or stele could perpetuate the fear generated by the victorious royal action. This idea can be found in an inscription by the Assyrian king Aššurnaṣirpal II (883–859), commemorating the submission – all nominal by the way – of a part of Suhu, a region located on the current Syrian-Iraqi border in 878:[19]

> (Thus) I established my victory and strength over the land Suhu; fear of my dominion reached as far as Karduniaš (i.e., Babylonia); awe of my weapons overwhelmed Chaldea (i.e., south of Babylonia); I unleashed my brilliance (*namurratī*) upon the mountains on the banks of the Euphrates, I made an image of myself (and) wrote thereon (an account of) my victory and strength. I erected (it) in the city Suru. (The inscription reads): "Ashurnasirpal, the king whose strength is constantly praiseworthy, whose face is turned towards the desert, who delights in losing his javelin."

The victory stele – both written and figurative – reminded that the king submerged the country. Its function was also mainly to frighten the unsubmissive Babylonians through the king's "brilliance." This "brilliance" (*namurratu*) was attested to his supernatural status (see below).

Nevertheless, one may wonder how much power the Mesopotamians actually attributed to the royal images. A number of examples reveal that the statues of monarchs, including those of the reigning kings and their designated heirs, were considered to have magical powers comparable to these of divinities. The role of these images is implied in the divine guarantee of oaths passed to validate treaties and their obligation to preserve these written documents:[20]

> Whoever changes, disregards, transgresses or erases the oaths of this tablet or [dis]regards … this treaty and transgresses its oath, [may the

19 *RIMA* 2, p. 214, col. iii, l. 23–26. For the Suhu in the 9th century, see Tenu and Clancier (2012) 249–258 and Clancier (2020).

20 *SAA* II, 6, § 35.

> guardian(s) of] this treaty tablet, [Aššur], king of the gods, and the great gods, my lords, [……] the statue of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, or the statue of Aššurbanipal, the great crown prince designate, or the statue of [his] b[rother ……] the seal of the [great] ru[ler, father] of the gods, [(*here was the result of the curse*)]. You shall guard [this treaty tablet which] is sealed with the seal of Aššur, king of the gods, and set up in your presence, like your own god.

These treaties had to be respected, because they were sworn before the deities (present in the form of symbols or images), who were responsible for ensuring the punishment of a possible transgressor, by sending diseases to his family and country. The lines of the curse text quoted here are damaged, but the presence of divine and royal statues on an equal footing suggests that the latter could assume a role identical to that of the gods in protecting the treaties. The place of the heirs in such a document should not be surprising, because one of the strengths of the Assyrian monarchy was that the reigning king could choose his successor from his family and, if possible, among his sons, which made the Crown Prince acquire sacredness close to that of the sovereign.[21] The fact that in a very theoretical way the Assyrian monarchy was transmitted in one and the same family for centuries supports the idea that kings were considered to be of a different essence from that of men. This essence made the monarchs and heirs possess certain powers reminiscent of the divine powers of deities.

Thus, the images of kings were not only reserved in sanctuaries. Statues of Assyrian monarchs can be found throughout the empire in order to mark the space of the political and supernatural power of Aššur and his representative, the Assyrian king. However, according to the epigraphic sources they are found mainly in shrines, such as Harran in the city of the moon-god,[22] in Borsippa in the cella of Tašmetu, the wife of Nabu, immediately south of Babylon, where Šamaš-šum-ukin, Esarhaddon's son was represented as a carrier of baskets of materials for the restoration of the temple (fig. 1.2), like his brother Aššurbanipal in Babylon on a stele discovered in Esagil, the temple of Bel-Marduk (fig. 1.3). But royal representations were also placed in the streets, a practice that was still in use under the Achaemenids; they were also engraved in the rock or placed in the form of stelae at strategic points of the empire.[23]

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21 Radner (2010) 26–27.

22 *SAA* XIII, p. xiv.

23 *SAA* XIII, p. xiii–xiv.

FIGURE 1.2
Šamaš-šum-ukin (Borsippa, Ezida temple of Nabu)

FIGURE 1.3
Aššurbanipal (Babylon, Esagil temple of Bel-Marduk)

We do not have any royal statues that were erected before the gods, with a few exceptions, such as those of the sons of Esarhaddon.[24] This is largely due to the materials that most often composed them (precious wood, copper, lapis

24 However, these statues probably played basically the role of orant.

FIGURE 1.4
Stele of Šamši-Adad V (Nimrud, Ancient Kalhu, Ezida temple of Nabu)

lazuli, silver and gold)[25] and which have not withstood time or human envy. On the other hand, many Assyrian or Babylonian stelae showing the rulers under divine symbols recall the proximity of the king and the gods.[26] In addition, on the orthostats or paintings of Assyrian palaces the king is sometimes depicted sitting on his throne with his feet on a footrest. This is a very parallel posture to that of the deities represented seated. The king's 'sitting' posture in majesty is the same as that of a god. However, many stelae have the monarch standing (fig. 1.4).

4 The Efficient Sacredness of the Royalty of Divine Right in the First Millennium

The king's representations, steles or statues were the objects of offerings, as were these of the deities. It could be possible, although it is debatable, that in the texts establishing the list of the statues of a sanctuary, in the statues of the kings it has sometimes been written ^{d}NU-MAN is *Ṣalam-šarri* "statue of the

25 *SAA* XIII, p. xiv.
26 Radner (2010) 26.

king(s)" – the small "d" designating a divinity. Perhaps we have here a reflection of the sacredness of an object that is essentially supernatural. However, not everyone agrees with this explanation: Dalley suggested that Ṣalmu-šarri (not Ṣalam-šarri) should be seen as a name of the god Ṣalmu.[27] However, if we accept that $^{(d)}$*Ṣalam-šarri* designates the statue or statues of kings present in the temples, then the epigraphic examples multiply.[28]

The role of statues and royal images in the oaths of the treaties and the offerings suggests that these objects were more than mere images of prayers. This practice of offering is widespread in Mesopotamia. If we look at the most extensive Assyrian-Babylonian documentation on the subject, we will discover that it is found in much smaller kingdoms. This is the case of the Suhu, led by Šamaš-reš-uṣur around the second quarter of the 8th century BCE. Suhu was located in the Middle Euphrates in the Syrian-Iraqi border, and it was a small state with Babylonian and Assyrian influences. In the first half of the 8th century the temporary decline of Assyrian power and the weakness of the kingdom of Babylon caused the sovereigns of the Suhu to gain real independence. As a result, one of its leaders, Šamaš-reš-uṣur insisted on erecting a stele displaying its military exploits and its various hydraulic and architectural works. He had represented himself on it together with some deities, such as Ištar, Adad and perhaps Ānat (in a break). As displayed in the following pagination, he did not make any differences between the representations:[29]

> Epigraph 1 (next to the figure of the goddess Ištar)
> "[Image of the goddess] Ištar."
> Epigraph 2 (next to the figure of the god Adad)
> "Image (NU) of the god Adad."
> Epigraph 3 (next to the figure of Šamaš-reš-uṣur)
> "Image of Šamaš-reš-uṣur, governor (a word for king in this context) of the land of Suhu and the land of Mari."
> Epigraph 4 (between the figures of the god Adad and Šamaš-reš-uṣur)
> "I have established one litre of bread (and) one litre of fine beer as the regular offerings for this stele.
> Anyone who protects the palace may eat (it)."
> Epigraph 5 (restored to right of figure of Šamaš-reš-uṣur)
> ["Image of *Ānat?*"]

27 Dalley (1986) 90–91.

28 See the tablet *SAA* VII, 62 where there is a question of royal statues, lines l. oi14'; oi12'; oiii10'; oiii16'; oiv6'; ri10 (see the introduction to this text *SAA* VII, xxiv–xxv).

29 Frame (1995) 282.

Thus, this stele, which could initially be mistaken for a simple royal inscription, also intended to pay tribute to the deities and the king who had erected it. The offerings are reminiscent of those made before the divine statues. As for their consumption by humans, it is part of the normal practice of redistributing the "remains" of divine meals. This stele probably did not only intend to recall the supernatural power of the king during his lifetime, but also to serve as an anchor for a future cult to himself as a prestigious dynastic ancestor.[30] In Assyria royal statues also received regular offerings. During some ceremonies kings themselves provided these gifts, as they did during the New Year's festival.[31]

If we now return to the text of the creation of the kings *vs* 24, 92[32] quoted in the introduction, and relate it to the oaths taken before the images of the Assyrian kings and their heirs or the offerings made to such objects, we understand that there was a real attempt to theorize the sacred – if not divine – status of the Mesopotamian monarch in the first millennium.

The power of the oath given to the king can be found in the following severely damaged passage:

> He who speaks lies and deceit to the king, if it's a … it will […].

Never lie to the king, which is obvious. There are oath texts that explicitly remind of this. This is particularly the case with the text called the "*Protocole des devins*" by its editor J. M. Durand. This document from the Old-Babylonian period, dating from the 18th century, was discovered in the city of Mari. He requires the diviners not to hide anything from Zimri-Lim, the ruler of the time:[33]

> Lors de la prise de présages pour Zimri-Lim, mon Seigneur, lors d'une extipicine, tout ce qui se produira et que je verrai, ou bien lors d'une prise de présages pour un simple particulier, lors d'une extipicine, tout ce qui se produira et que je verrai, le mauvais présage défavorable, tout ce que je verrai, je ne manquerai pas de le dire à Zimri-Lim, mon Seigneur, et je ne le cacherai pas.

Any subject must report to his suzerain, not hide anything from him and of course not lie to him. This is one of the foundations of the relationship

30 Clancier (2017) 363.
31 Menzel (1981) T80, col. i, l. 10'–11' & *SAA* XIII, p. xv.
32 Mayer (1987).
33 Durand (1988) 13–15.

between sovereigns and their people. However, the text *VS* 24, 92 of the creation of kings differs from the simple list of these duties. For example, if we compare it with the tablet *SAA* II, 6, § 35, – quoted above and attributed powers close to these of deities to the statues of kings and their heirs – we see that in the first millennium not taking an oath made the monarch cast a curse certainly on behalf of the gods; but also the king himself or the monarchic power was considered as transcendental. Such a phenomenon taken as a generality in this document is echoed in the neo-Assyrian documentation of the 7th century. This is particularly the case in the *Aššurbanipal Coronation Hymn*,[34] which specifies:[35]

> He who speaks with the king (Aššurbanipal) disloyally or treasonably – if he is a notable, he will die a violent death; if he is a rich man, he will become poor.
>
> He who in his heart plots evil against the king – Erra will call him to account in a bout of plague.

The parallel between these texts, *VS* 24, 92 and *SAA* III, 11 (the latter explicitly concerning Aššurbanipal), probably confirms that the broken end of *VS* 24, 92 was that anyone who lied or betrayed the king actually casted a curse upon him. What the Aššurbanipal Coronation Hymn completes is the double action of both a transcendental sacred monarchical power on the one hand, and the deities who are at its origin and who are the guarantors on the other. Here, Erra, the Chthonian god of war and destruction, often confused with Nergal in the first millennium, intervenes in one of his favourite fields to punish the plotter. It seems, however, that the curse mentioned in the first paragraph of this quotation is not the work of a particular divinity but of the monarchy itself, a monarchy that has become efficient even outside the ruling person.[36]

4.1 *The Separation of the Monarchy and the Country from the Royal Person in the Late Bronze Age*

The monarchical function was no longer concentrated in the king alone, just as the state no longer found its only expression in the reigning monarch. It is

34 *SAA* III, 11.

35 *SAA* III, 11, r.9–r.11.

36 This vision of the monarchy seems to be an evolution of the second half of the second millennium. However, the reigning king was already in charge of a certain transcendental power as early as the third millennium, when Ur-Nammu, king of Ur, was referred to as the ^{d}LAMMA, the "protective spirit" of his country. However, this aspect should be compared to the phenomenon of the personal divinization of kings; Vacin (2011) 191.

possible that the evolution no longer confuses the individual, and his function finds its legal and religious origins in the evolution of the concept of the State in the Late Bronze Age. Indeed, until the middle of the 2nd millennium, treaties between kingdoms were in fact concluded between the ruling kings. The death of one of the parties rendered the treaty null and void. We can take the example of the treaty between Hammu-rabi of Babylon (1792–1750) and Zimri-Lim, king of Mari (1774–1762), against the sovereign of Elam Ṣiwapalarhuhpak with whom they were then at war:[37]

> Jure par Šamaš des cieux, jure par Addu des cieux, par ces dieux là, ô Hammu-rabi, fils de Sin-muballiṭ, roi de Babylone (en ces termes)!
>
> "À compter de ce jour, pour ma vie entière, je serai en guerre avec Siwapalarhuhpak. Je ne ferai pas prendre la route à des serviteurs à moi, comme messagers, avec des serviteurs à lui et ne les lui dépêcherai pas!
>
> Je ne ferai pas la paix avec Siwapalarhuhpak, sans l'aveu de Zimri-Lim, roi de Mari et du pays bédouin. Si, avec Siwapalarhuhpak, je me propose de faire la paix, je jure d'en délibérer avec Zimri-Lim, roi de Mari et du pays bédouin (pour savoir) s'(il faut) ne pas faire la paix. Je jure que c'est de concert que nous ferons la paix avec Siwapalarhuhpak!
>
> C'est avec de bons sentiments et sincérité complète que je formule ce serment par mes dieux, Šamaš et Addu, qui est juré à Zimri-Lim, fils de Yahdun-Lim, roi de Mari et du pays bédouin et que je m'approche de lui."

This oath only involves the ruling kings, Hammu-rabi and Zimri-Lim, while the treaties of the following period, the Late Bronze Age, no longer only take into account the ruling sovereign but also the royalty and the country. This can be seen in the treaty concluded between Hattušili III (1262–1240), king of the Hittite country, and Ramses II (1279–1213), the Pharaoh of Egypt[38]

> § 5. Ramses, beloved of Amon, great king, king of the land of Miṣri, is in good understanding and brotherhood with [Hattusili], great king, king of the land of Hatti.
>
> The sons of Ramses, beloved of Amon, king of the land of Miṣri, will be at peace and [in brotherhood] with the sons of Hattusili, great king, king of the land of Hatti, forever. They will be in the same fraternal [and] peaceful relationship as we are.

37 Durand (1997) 452–453.

38 Beckman (1995) 1–6 and 90–95; and (2003). For a useful approach of the diplomatic relations during the Late Bronze Age, see Podany (2012).

> And the country of Miṣri and the country of Hatti will be in good understanding and brotherhood like us forever.

Treaties between the great powers of the 15th–12th centuries show that the monarchy surpassed the king. It seems logical to think that such a concept has not been limited to the political-diplomatic matters, but it has also found expression in the religious field.

4.2 *A Transcendent Monarchy in the First Millennium*

The king in the first millennium is therefore only the depository of the sacred monarchical function created by the gods but attributed only to men shaped differently from the common mortal. It is interesting to return to the comparison of the two parallel documents, *VS* 24, 92, the creation of kings on the left, and *SAA* III, 11, the *Aššurbanipal Coronation Hymn* on the right:

VS 24, 92		*Aššurbanipal Coronation Hymn*	
38'.	Anu gave him the crown, Enlil gave him the throne,	r.5.	Anu gave his crown, Enlil gave his throne;
39'.	Nergal gave him the weapons, Ninurta gave him brilliance (*šalummassu*).	r.6.	Ninurta gave his weapon;
40'.	Belet-ili gave him a beautiful appearance	r.7.	Nergal gave his brillance (*šalummassu*).
41'.	Nusku gave instructions, gave advice *and was at his service*.	r.8.	Nusku sent and placed advisers before him.

There are minor differences between these two texts, since Ninurta and Nergal are reversed. This detail does not invalidate the fact that these two documents are from the same scribal tradition, even if the first one, *VS* 24, 92, comes from Babylon and the second, the *Aššurbanipal Coronation Hymn*, from the city of Aššur.[39] The Mesopotamian king, and more specifically the Assyrian

39 Other Assyrian texts have the same way to present the king's power. See for example *RINAP* 4, Esarhaddon 48, r.52–r.53: "At the beginning of my kingship (Esarhaddon speaking), in my first year, when the god Aššur, king of the gods, kindly placed me on the throne of my father, the god Anu granted me his crown, the god Enlil his throne, the god Ninurta his weapon, (and) the god Nergal his brilliance (*šalummassu*)." Esarhaddon is the father of Aššurbanipal, and we can see here again that Nergal is the one giving the brilliance.

king, received the symbols[40] of his office (the tiara and the throne), his means of action (weapons) and the divine council in the person of the god Nusku, son and minister of the god Enlil, the king of the gods and provider of royalty until the end of the second millennium. Nusku thus provides his advice to both the king of the gods and the king(s) of men. It is also a divinity gaining importance in the first millennium, precisely because it is very closely linked to the proper exercise of royalty.[41]

Finally, in *vs* 24, 92 the king is also given a beautiful appearance by Belet-ili on the command of Ea:

> (Ea commands) "Gird the whole of his figure so pleasingly, make perfect his countenance and well formed his body!"
> (and then) "Belet-ili gave him a beautiful appearance."

The king's body is therefore itself special, even if it is vulnerable to sickness and death. What makes it exceptional and allows to definitively place it in a different category from that of Men is its radiance also called brilliance (*melammu*/*šalummatu*/*namurratu*).

5 The Royal Radiance, a God's Attribute to a Man

5.1 *Origin*

The royal radiance is most often rendered by the terms *melammu* (translated here systematically as "radiance"), or *šalummatu* (translated as "brilliance"), or more occasionally as *namurratu* (translated as "brilliance" as well) meaning "aura."[42] It is initially an attribute of deities, whose power generates a halo around them. For example, this is particularly true of the moon god Sin, or Šamaš, the sun god. In the latter case *melammu* can even mean "sunshine."[43]

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40 On Orphic mystic union and symbols see Chpt. 7, sect. 1 and n. 5; on Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; on theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13, sect. 1.3 and n. 18; Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, and sect. 3.

41 In the city of Harran, Nusku is associated with the Moon-god Sin and he is the one who gave his brilliance (^{d}nusku *dāpinu uza'inšu šarrūti*, "Nusku, the mighty, adorned him with the radiance (*melammu*) of kingship") to Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon; see Schaudig (2001) 364, 2.5 col. I, l. 16.

42 See n. 43 below. See also discussion on Chpt. 2, sect. 4; on royal divine aura on Chpt. 2, sect. 4; on superhuman aura see Chpt. 6, sect. 1 and n. 28; on solar halo in relation to the emperor Constantine see Chpt. 4, sect. 3 and n. 19.

43 Horowitz (1993) 54.

However, minor divinities as well as genies and demons also have this attribute.[44] The *melammu* is an attribute of divine weapons (for the kings) and artefacts as well.

Kings claim to own *melammu* from the end of the third millennium and the beginning of the second, essentially under the third Ur dynasty (2112–2004)[45] and at the very beginning of the Old-Babylonian period (2004–1595). It is especially true in the city of Isin, whose kings were still being divided.[46] As already mentioned, the later Old-Babylonian kings used to call themselves "divine," but instead retained the radiance as a specific mark of their singularity among human beings. This is the case, for example, of Samsu-iluna, the king of Babylon from 1749 to 1712, who, having inherited from his father Hammu-rabi (1792–1750) a kingdom at its territorial height, said the following:[47]

> The fearsome radiance of my kingship (*puluhti melam šarrūtiya*) covered the borders of heaven and earth.

This inscription clearly establishes a link between the *melammu* and the power of the king who claims to have it. Hammu-rabi says of himself:[48]

> [I], Hammu-rabi, god of [his] nation, the one whom the god Anum [has covered] with the radiance of kingship (ME-LÁM-NAM-LUGAL-LA).

Cassin suggested the hypothesis that at that time only powerful kings could claim *melammu*.[49] In any case, this is illustrated by the example of the titulatures that the kings of the first Babylonian dynasty attributed it to themselves, although this is not constituting a definitive proof.

5.2 *The Royal Radiance during the First Millennium BCE*

In the first millennium the three terms *melammu*, *šalummatu* and *namurratu* were identified, without being possible to establish a clear theoretical

44 See *CT* XVI, 42, 12 sq. referring to the *alû*-ghost or demon used for comparison: "they are charged with terror-inspiring brilliance (*puluhti šalummata*) like the *alû*-ghost, covered with a terrible radiance (*melammu*)" (*CAD* A, p. 375).

45 See *RIME* 3/2, p. 93.

46 Cassin (1968) 69–70. The kings of Isin still used the divine determinative DINGIR ("god") before their names, something mostly translated as "divine R(oyal) N(ame)."

47 *RIME* 4, p. 382, l. 64–66.

48 *RIME* 4, p. 344, l. 1–2.

49 Cassin (1968) 66.

difference between them in both neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian texts. Moreover, the lexical glossary of comments establishes a similarity between *melammu* and *šalummatu*.[50] *Namurratu* is sometimes considered as a synonym for *puluhtu*, "fear."[51]

If we have to look for a few nuances, we could discover some between *melammu* on one side and *šalummatu*/*namurratu* on the other. They are found in the nature of the radiance phenomenon. The *šalummatu* is the brilliance attributed to the kings by the gods. It is therefore the luminous glow of the monarchical power, of which they are the provisional depositories. This is a term particularly used in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal, as already mentioned,[52] which reflects the acquisition of this new feature at the time of the monarch's ascension to the throne. Therefore, it is often a tangible manifestation of a radiance phenomenon: brightness and fright. *Melammu* can also be an expression of brilliance, the aura that inspires fear. Therefore, in the case the god as well as in the case of the king it causes fear, as Sennacherib states:[53]

> On my third campaign, I marched to the land Hatti (west of the Euphrates river). Fear of my lordly brilliance (*pulhi melamme bēlūtiya*) overwhelmed Luli, the king of the city Sidon, and he fled afar into the midst of the sea.

Furthermore, in relation to the differences between the two words, melammu can even refer to the intrinsic quality of a radiance phenomenon, its nature and not only its manifestation. For example, this can be seen in the Assyrian inscriptions of the 7th century, in which both sets of terms are used at the same time: melammu (radiance) refers to the attribute (here radiating from the Aššur tiara) and šalummatu its manifestation (brilliance):[54]

> I had an artfully (designed) crown, which is befitting the lordship of the god Aššur, king of the gods, my lord, made of red gold and precious stones, and I restored it. The god Aššur, the great lord, accepted mag-

50 The two words are synonymous in commentary texts, such as *CT* XXVI, 40, iv, 21; see *CAD* Š/1, p. 283 for further bibliographical references and parallels to this widely broken text.

51 *CAD* N/1, p. 253.

52 *VS* 24, 92, l. 39'; *SAA* III, 11, r.7 and *RINAP* 4, Esarhaddon 42, 0.52–53.

53 *RINAP* 3/1, Sennacherib 4, l.32.

54 *RINAP* 4, Esarhaddon 48, r.84–86.

> nanimously that crown, (which is) clothed in radiance (*labiš melammu*), full of dignity, radiating a glow, (and) manifesting brilliance (*naši šalummatu*), and his spirit was pleased (and) his countenance shone.

The Aššur's tiara could among its qualities possess *melammu*, "radiance," spreading its luminosity, which is the *šalummatu* or "brilliance." If the king's *melammu* or *šalummatu* makes his enemies tremble, it is possible to keep him active, once the sovereign has left. To achieve this, as examined above, it is sufficient to erect an image of the king and his gods (or their symbols). Such a stele is considered to have sufficient power to remind everyone of the fear generated by the royal presence. This is what Aššurnaṣirpal II did after defeating the Suhu in 878:[55]

> I unleashed my brilliance (*namurratī*) upon the mountains on the banks of the Euphrates, I made an image of myself (and) wrote thereon (an account of) my victory and strength.

In this example Aššurnaṣirpal II uses a third term *namurratu*, which explicitly refers to the luminous brilliance of the monarch; the verb *namāru* means "to shine." This term can also be used for gods, as for example it often appears in the inscriptions of Tiglath-phalasar III (745–727), and refers to "the brilliance of Aššur, my Lord (*nammurat Aššur bēliya*)."[56]

Some Assyrian monarchs did not hesitate to express clearly how brilliant they were. This is the case of Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884), the father of Aššurnaṣirpal II, who said, "I am magnificent (*šalummāku*),"[57] or Adad-nerari II (911–891), the grandfather, who said about himself, "I am radiant (*namurāku*)."[58] It is true that these three Assyrian monarchs felt superior even to their immediate ancestors, because they were launching a new conquest movement after the decline of their empire at the end of the second millennium.[59]

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55 *RIMA* 2, p. 214, col. iii, l. 23–26.

56 *RINAP* 1, Tiglath-pileser III, 42, l. 12. The word *nammuratu* seems to have been particularly appreciated by the scribes of Tiglath-pileser III.

57 *RIMA* 2, p. 166, l. 30.

58 *RIMA* 2, p. 147, l. 15. This sentence is part of a far more personal exaltation l. 14–15: "I am king, I am lord, I am powerful, I am important, I am praiseworthy, I am magnificent (*šur-ru-ha-ku*), I am strong, I am mighty, I am fierce, I am radiant (*na-mur-ra-ku*), I am a hero, I am a warrior, I am a virile lion, I am foremost, I am exalted, I am raging."

59 See for this examples Cassin (1968) 72.

In any case, these distinctions remain rather theoretical, especially if we look at the synonyms given to these different terms in the commentaries:[60]

> His brilliance (*namurrassu*) will acquire no rival" (text to be commented): his brilliance (*namurrassu*) is said in (the list) ERIM.HUŠ (to be synonym of): NÍ (to be pronounced) NI; NÍ.GAL; SU.LIM (and) ME.LEM$_4$.MA (which respectively mean): fear (*pulhtu*), brilliance (*namrirri*), brilliance (*šalummatu*) (and) radiance (*melammu*).

5.3 *The King, a Special Human Being, but Still Human*

Royal radiance makes it possible in a nuanced way to establish first that the king was not a human being like the others, because he was adorned with a supernatural attribute; and secondly that he remained at the same time fully dependent on the gods like every human. Indeed, radiance is attributed to the king at the time of his enthronement, since it is received at the same time as the crown, throne and arms.[61] Cassin also asserts: "La splendeur dont bénéficie le roi n'est en réalité qu'un prolongement de l'irradiation lumineuse que dégagent les dieux."[62]

The radiance indicates both unambiguously that the king is an elected representative of the gods, but that he also remains totally dependent on them, because *melammu* or *šalummatu*/*namurratu* can undergo eclipses or even be definitively removed from the attributes of the king who then loses his power. Such an eclipse or permanent loss occurs, for example, when the king is defeated in battle. This withdrawal is a choice of the gods, which may or may not be clearly motivated by the king's bad actions. As a general rule, such an event does not appear in the body of the neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions that glorify the power of the king and his deities. On the other hand, this is found in other categories of curse texts. A good example of the Old-Babylonian era can be found in the epilogue of the Hammu-Rabi Code of laws. Indeed, Hammurabi curses any person, and in particular king, lord or governor, who would violate his laws or stele, using the following terms:[63]

60 Finkel (2006). This tablet comes from the Iqiša library of the beginning of the Hellenistic period. The commentaries were part of the tradition and knowledge of scholars. They consisted mainly of vocabulary explanations or glossaries on the most difficult aspects of the texts to decipher; see for these texts, Frahm (2011).

61 See above *VS* 24, 92; *SAA* III, 11 and Esarhaddon 42, 0.52–53.

62 Cassin (1968) 77.

63 Roth (1997) 137, xlix, 45–52.

> May the great god Anu, father of the gods, who has proclaimed my reign, deprive him of the radiance of royalty (*melammī šarrūtim*), smash his sceptre, and curse his destiny.

Therefore, royal radiance can be withdrawn from a sovereign who does not respect an oath or an object protected by a curse. But it can also happen for fortuitous reasons that are detected by divination, especially by the observation of the moon.[64]

6 A New Step? The Ruler Cult at the End of the First Millennium

Making offerings before the royal images of monarchs, whose nature exceeds that of their human subjects, does not make them gods. However, the reflections of the nature of monarchy created by the Ancient scholars (ummânu) surrounding the king concerned leaders of the country coming from the country whether from Assyria or Babylonia. Mesopotamian kings were part of a long cultural tradition. Nevertheless, many changes questioned this close cultural connexion between the king and his kingdom. First, between 614 and 610 the cities of Assyria were conquered by the Medes and Babylonians. These events caused the disappearance of the Assyrian kingdom, putting an end to the use of cuneiform writing in the region. The neo-Babylonian empire founded by Nabopolassar (626–605) was conquered by Cyrus in 539. Nabonidus, the last king of a state with a Sumerian-Akkadian tradition, gave way to the Achaemenides.[65] Therefore Mesopotamia was part of a vast empire ruled mainly from southwestern Iran. With the defeat of Darius III (336–330) at Gaugamela in 331 and his assassination in 330, the Achaemenid empire fell into the hands of the Greco-Macedonians led by Alexander the Great. His death in 323 marked a period of conflict between the Diadochs, the Successors, which led the whole of Mesopotamia to fall under the Seleucid domination. Mesopotamia and North Syria then formed the political and economic heart of the new empire.

6.1 *A Country without a King?*

These political ruptures are accompanied by other profound transformations in the Mesopotamian thinking about the relationship between Man and the

64 Cassin (1968) 77–79.

65 For the history of the late first century BCE in Mesopotamia, see Joannès (2004) 203–260.

divine. Divination and especially astrology concerning primarily the king and his country evolved enormously from the 5th century onwards.[66] Indeed, mathematical or predictive astronomy now makes it possible to predict the eclipses that concern monarchs in order to protect the king and his country before any event takes place. This is undoubtedly an upheaval in the way in which the relationship between the divine and the mortal was viewed. In addition to this conceptual evolution (one could say a scholarly evolution), there is the disappearance of any endogenous monarchy in the country. It is therefore for the Persian (5th–4th centuries) and Hellenistic periods (4th–1st centuries, with the beginning of Parthian domination) a time of reinvention of relations between the king and his subjects and between the king and the gods.

The description of the status of the king had been until then essentially the role of the high Assyrian and Babylonian scholars trained in the temples and working for them or joining the royal court. Under the Greek-Macedonian domination and more strictly concerning Babylon (the Assyrian cuneiform sources ceasing at the end of the 7th century), the servants of the great sanctuaries such as the Esagil of Babylon or the Bit Reš of Uruk were engaged in a reflection on what had become the monarchical power in the hands of a dynasty largely unfamiliar to Sumero-akkadian culture. In Uruk the unique text *BaM* 2, 89[67] reflects the evolution of royalty and its status throughout the real and mythical history of Mesopotamia. This tablet written in 165 BCE is signed by Anu-belšunu, the son of Nidintu-Anu, a descendant of Sin-leqe-unninni who was a *kalû* (lamentation-priest) and astrologer (*ṭupšar Enūma Anu Enlil*). He was a member of one of the largest families of scholars in the sanctuary and in the entire city of Uruk. His text is perhaps his own creation, since it makes no reference to an older original, and it evokes a vision of a continuous development of the monarchy, from its creation to the end of the 3rd century BCE.

He pointed out that next to each important king was an equally important scholarly advisor. The first king is accompanied by Oannes, the most important of the mythical sages (*apkallu*) antediluvian who brought the main knowledge to the mankind. Thus, the text draws up a list from *apkallu* to an event concerning precisely the city of Uruk, in which this text is centred. From the King Gilgameš onwards it was no longer an *apkallu* but an *ummânu*, a human scholar who advised kings. Therefore, we are entering a so-called "historical"

66 Rochberg (1993).
67 Dijk and Mayer (1980) Tf. 39.

section of the document with the replacement of the *apkallu* by humans. The Gilgameš scholar is Sin-leqe-unninni, the ancestor claimed by Anu-belšunu, the author of the text.[68] This scholar is also known as the author of the canonical version of the *Epic of Gilgameš*. But he is supposed to have lived at the end of the second millennium, while Gilgameš would be in the first half of the third.

Thus, the aim is not to make a history of kings and their scientists but to propose a discourse centred above all on Uruk. Other scholars appear who are often known elsewhere,[69] such as Esagil-kin-apli, Esagil-kin-ubbib or Aba-Enlil-dari. Regarding the latter, the text specifies that he had a second name, Ahiqar, attributed by the Arameans. This scholar lived in the time of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669).[70] No neo-Babylonian king was subsequently named, neither were Persians nor Macedonians. We then immediately switch to a single name preceded by a break that makes the text difficult to interpret. The text says repeating the previous passage:

> [During the] time of Esarhaddon the king: Aba-Enlil-dari was the scholar (*ummânu*)
> [*that?*] the Arameans (*Ahlamû*) call Ahiqar
> [*Afterwards?*] (was) Nikarchus.[71]

The "Afterwards" is in a break, which makes the understanding of the text uncertain, but it seems that the name Nikarchus cannot be a third way to call Aba-Enlil-dari, because there would have been plenty of space to indicate it on the same line as Ahiqar. Moreover, the Greek name of Nikarchus appeared only late in Lower Mesopotamia, after the Macedonian conquest. On the other hand, it was used by Anu-uballiṭ-Nikarchus governor (*šaknu*) of Uruk around the middle of the 3rd century.[72] He said he was descended from Ah'utu, one of the great families of the Uruk sanctuaries, and he could be considered as an *ummânu*, a scholar. Thus, according to this document, since the creation of humanity, both the monarchical power and that of the sages sent by the gods (the *apkallu*) and later replaced by the scholars (the *ummânu*) have always ruled the country together. With the disappearance of the kings of the coun-

68 "[During the time] of Gilgameš the king: Sin-leqi-unninni was the scholar"; Dijk and Mayer (1980) Tf. 39, 0.12.

69 Lambert (1957).

70 Dijk and Mayer (1980) Tf. 39, r.3–r.5.

71 For this reading, see Clancier, Coloru and Gorre (2017) 211.

72 On Anu-uballiṭ-Nikarchus, see Monerie (2014) 154–155.

try the political and religious power would have been embodied in one and the same person, both *ummânu* and political leader, but only from the city of Uruk. Anu-uballiṭ-Nikarchus is said to have served as a model for this new conception of power that could explain the end of a kingship that originated in the country. However, this was already an obsolete model, when the tablet was written, because the city of Uruk, ruled in the 3rd century by the administrators of its sanctuaries, probably adopted the Greek institutions of the Poleis under Seleucus IV (186–175), relegating the *ummânu* to their sole activities in the temples.[73]

6.2 *A Country with a Foreign King*

Despite the temporary acquisition by the sanctuaries and their scholars of a fairly broad control over the great cities of Babylon, the Seleucid king was far from being absent. One of the empire's capitals, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, was located in Babylonia, and the kings regularly came to the region.[74] They were part of a certain continuity of Mesopotamian practices, since they introduced a ruler cult that is attested in different forms; first in a chronicle of Babylon and then in Urukean economic texts.[75] The chronicle in question is now called *Babylonian Chronicle of the Hellenistic Period* 12.[76]

> [Year] 88, Seleucus (III, 225–223) king, month *nisannu* (I). That month, 8th day (7 April 224), a certain Babylonian, the *šatammu* of Esagil, provided [for the …] … of Esagil, at the command of the king, in accordance with the leather letter that the king had sent before, with money from the royal treasury from his own estate 11 fat oxen, 100 fat sheep (and) 11 fat ducks for the food offering within Esagil, for Bel, Beltiya and the great gods and for the ritual of king Seleucus and his sons.

The terms "for the ritual," *ana dulli* (written here *ana dullu*) in Akkadian have been widely discussed. It is indeed quite common to have references to offerings to the gods made for the king's good health, but the terms are then *ana*

73 For the political history of Babylonian sanctuary during the Hellenistic period, see Clancier and Monerie (2014).

74 On Seleucid evergetism in Babylonia and royal ideology, see Stevens (2014).

75 For a good approach of the ruler cult in Hellenistic Babylonia, see Linssen (2004) 124–128.

76 *BCHP* 12, see Finkel and Spek (Forthcoming). The chronicle can be accessed on http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-seleucus_iii/seleucus_iii_01.html. Lines cited: 0.3'–0.8'. For a discussion on the ruler cult with further bibliography, see Spek (2016).

bulṭi. Therefore, it is quite likely that we have here a reference to a ruler cult, whose inauguration date remains unknown. Economic documents from Uruk complete this text. These are sales of prepends referring to services to be performed in front of the "statue of kings":[77]

> Illut-Anu, whose second name is Ina-qibit-Anu, son of Anu-mukin-apli, son of Anu-mar-ittannu, scribe on parchment of the Properties of Anu, voluntarily sold his prebend of roasted grain from the house of Nidintu-Ištar, of sheep's spine, stomach and meat […] and dates of Dilmun which are offered on the 27th day, monthly, on Anu's offering table; the prebend of roasted grain from the house of Nidintu-Ištar that are offered on the 27th day, monthly, on the offering table of the statue of the kings. (…).
>
> Illut-Anu, the seller of this prebend and this house, received this silver from 1 refined mine (of silver) of Anu-mar-ittannu, son of Nidintu-Ištar. He is paid.
>
> (…) In Uruk, the month of simanu, the 12th day, the year 131 (June 13, 181), Seleucos (being) king.

Unfortunately, the statue is not more detailed, but it is quite likely that a structured cultural ruler developed under the Seleucids in Mesopotamia as in the rest of the empire. Before the end of the 3rd century, there was no reference to a ritual of the king, as in the chronicle *BCHP* 12, nor any prebend before the statues of the kings. Since the Assyrian and Babylonian kings already had statues in the temples and at least some of their images received offerings, it is possible to think that a Seleucid ruler cult could have taken place in the shrines of the Sumero-Akkadian tradition. At the end, all these did not make the king a true god, but prolonged the scholars' idea of the transcendent sacredness of the monarchy; also made possible to protect the country through the royal person, and undoubtedly brought some wealth to the sanctuaries.

7 Conclusion

The sacred status of the Mesopotamian king has not ceased to evolve throughout the three millennia of cuneiform documentation. Monarchy was estab-

77 *BRM* II, 36, 0.1–5, r.1–3 & 19. See also Linssen (2004) 127.

lished by divine right in Mesopotamia throughout these periods, but the king's place between gods and men has never ceased to lean in one direction or the other. First man then god, or rather "divine" in the third millennium; then monarch definitively became man again in the beginning of the second millennium, while keeping the *melammu*, the supernatural radiance. It unambiguously established his superhuman status.

Later on, the autonomisation of the concept of monarchy with the birth of that of a state separate from the royal person in the Late Bronze Age may have led to the establishment of a sacred monarchy, existing outside the reigning individual. That monarchy generated its own visible power in the first millennium through the ability of royal representations to guarantee treaties and unleash curses, just like divine statues. However, that monarchy did not exist without the will of the gods; it was indeed of divine right. Once created, it was one of the superior powers of the Mesopotamian world, far surpassing the kings themselves, who were only its temporary carriers, at least according to the conceptions of the first millennium. But the Assyro-Babylonian world was profoundly transformed with the destruction of Assyria and the conquest of Babylon by the Persians and then by the Greco-Macedonians.

The Babylonian scholars found themselves in a very difficult situation explaining the disappearance of the kings from Mesopotamia. Indeed, the monarchy created by the gods was an integral part of the Mesopotamian world. Despite some attempts to give a meaning to this evolution by proposing a fusion of political and religious (or scholarly) powers in favour of these scholars, it was necessary to adapt to the domination of culturally exogenous monarchies, which found in the royal sacredness of the Near East a way to structure their states.

To conclude with, looking at the history of the relationship between the monarchy and the divine, one may ask: why have kings never really succeeded in becoming gods? Indeed, the divinisations at the end of the third and beginning of the second millennium did not succeed in bringing kings into the pantheon of Mesopotamian deities, at least not on the level of true gods. Although the sacredness of the monarchy has always been recognized and ideologically well supported in the first millennium, the king has remained mortal. It was certainly a man created apart from his subjects, but nevertheless a man. The answer to this question undoubtedly appears in the myths of which there are examples throughout Mesopotamian history, such as the *Epic of Gilgameš* or the myth of Etana: kings, like all men, are mortal.

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ARM XXVI/1	Durand 1991
BCHP	*Babylonian Chronicle of the Hellenistic Period* = Finkel and Spek (Forthcoming)
BRM	Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan
BRM II	Clay 1913
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
RIMA	*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*
RIMA 2	Grayson 1991
RIME	*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods*
RIME 3/2	Frayne 1997
RIME 4	Frayne 1990
RINAP	*The Royal Inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian Period*
RINAP 1	Tadmor & Yamada 2011
RINAP 3/1	Grayson & Novotny 2012
RINAP 4	Leichty 2011
SAA	*State Archives of Assyria*
SAA II	Parpola & Watanabe 1988
SAA III	Livingstone 1989
SAA VII	Fales & Postgate 1992
SAA XIII	Cole & Machinist 1998

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CHAPTER 2

The Intersection of Gods and Kings in Achaemenid Iran

Christopher J. Tuplin

1 Introduction

I start with two premises. First, among conceptions of divinity those around royal divinity have a strong claim to interest. Second, there is no evidence that the Achaemenid king was categorized or worshipped as a god in the imperial heartland. The (rather few) Greek sources that directly suggested this were wrong. (The ones that spoke of an *isotheos* king or skated round the issue in other ways are, of course, another matter.) But our business here is with intersections between king and divinity other than simple identification of the king as a god or attribution of his success to the help of a god. Is Achaemenid royal exceptionalism due not just to divine favour but to an inherent divine quality? There has been a growing tendency to perceive mitigations of the king's human status, even in the heartland.[1] I have discussed these matters in an earlier essay (Tuplin 2017). Here I elaborate on some material that appears more briefly there. I do so in three sections: (1) A tale of two statues. (2) Royal rhetoric in the heartland religious environment. (3) Image, light and *daimōn*: royal divine aura in Greek texts.

2 A Tale of Two Statues

The two statues are a non-extant one in a Babylonian document from 485/4 BCE and a very much extant one from a monumental gateway in Susa. Both were statues of King Darius I.

1 Tuplin (2017) 93, n. 1. The same trend is exemplified by Garrison (2011) who argues for the numinosity of the king in royal iconography and Mofidi-Nasrabadi (2015) 172 who perceives "eine subtile verhüllte Form der Vergöttlichung". The statement of Charles (2016) 56 that the term *bandaka* that Darius uses in the Behistun inscription to describe his supporters has undertones of piety given the semi-divine status of Persian kings – something he evidently takes for granted – reflects the spread of such ideas. Kuhrt (2007) 475 is more measured: "The Persian king was not a god, but he was a person set apart; he was not like others." Silverman (2016) 187 positively affirms "the complete lack of an ideology of the king as divine."

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2.1 *Babylon*

The document records offerings to a statue of Darius in the Ebabbar temple of Sippar in the year after Darius' death.[2] The dull version of the back-story is that a royal statue receives posthumous cult in a fashion with Assyrian and some Neo-Babylonian precedents; the less dull version is that the statue had already existed during Darius' lifetime; and the much less dull version is that royal statue cult for a current or near current king was *not* part of the Neo-Babylonian landscape (apparent allusions being actually to a statue of the legendary third millennium king, Sargon of Akkad) – so much so that people from the traditional prebendary class would not service such a cult: this is why the prebend-owner, one Tattannu, is an outsider, a *novus homo* profiting from royal patronage and unconcerned by religious proprieties. There *is* a wider political context: we are on the eve of a year of Babylonian revolt, whose outcome was suppression of the traditional temple-related elite and a change in the political demography of Babylonia, so tension over this statue is a snapshot of bigger problems. But there is also a religious issue. Implicit is that Darius or Xerxes was pushing at the boundaries of the acceptable in the matter of quasi-divine kingship – i.e., there was a provocative appetite for enhancing the king's divine quality, at least outside his homeland.

2.2 *Egypt*

With the Susa statue[3] the dull story is that it is a Perso-Egyptian advertisement of the king, like the stelae displayed along the banks of Darius' Suez Canal – and unlike the decorations of the Hibis temple where Darius is figured in purely Egyptian fashion (to the point of being suckled by Neith).[4] A salient interesting story is more elusive. One hint is that a statue apparently made for

2 Waerzeggers (2014). BM 72747: Barley (of) the regular offerings of the statue of King Darius, from the first day of month *Ayyaru* (II) of the first year until the end of month *Du'uzu* (IV) of the first year of King Xerxes. Bunene-ibni, the slave, (the person in charge of) the rations of the king, and the deputy (*ēpišānu*) of Tattannu, has received (the barley) from Bēl-uballiṭ/Bēl-ahu-ittannu/Bēl-eṭēru. He has also received 1;0.4.1 *makkasu* dates of the month *Simanu* (III) of [x of] the king (?) from Bēl-uballiṭ. (*Witnesses*) Sippar, Xerxes 26-[x]-01 (= 485/4 BCE).

3 Kuhrt (2007) 477–482 (11.2, figs. 11.2–11.4), Yoyotte (2009), Wasmuth (2017) 101–124.

4 Wasmuth (2017) 125–155 (stelae), 224–238 (Hibis). For succinct assessment of the Egyptian and Persian elements in the statue see Razmjou (2002) 84–85, Wasmuth (2017) 122–124. At Hibis, by contrast, not only is Darius entirely Egyptian, but the temple's adornment unprecedentedly constitutes "a true compendium of religious literature and iconography from the Late Period" (Klotz 2014: 173) and "einen Versuch…, das ägyptische Weltwissen enzyklopädisch festzuhalten" (Sternberg el-Hotabi and Aigner 2006, 543).

Heliopolis ended up at Susa. The situation resonates with a story in Herodotus in which the priests prevent Darius from erecting a statue of himself in the Temple of Ptah because it would have blocked the view of statues of Sesostris and his family.[5] In this Memphite story no Persian statue is erected, whereas at Heliopolis it was *prima facie* erected but later removed. But there is clearly something in common, especially as the Heliopolis Atum sanctuary is a place of comparable status to that of Ptah at Memphis (and Amun at Karnak) and a significant one for royal legitimation, as exemplified by the recent discovery there of a c. nine metre high statue of Psammetichus I, founder of the Saite dynasty.[6] There are also potential Babylonian echoes, since (a) Herodotus reports that Xerxes forcibly removed a golden *andrias* from the temple of Bel-Marduk despite priestly opposition (1.183)[7] and (b) the contrast of Darius and Sesostris recalls what might be the contrast of Darius and Sargon of Akkad. At any rate, the story of the Susa Statue is not a wholly dull one. Can we expand on this?

The statue has Egyptian features: the presence of hieroglyphs, the subject ovals on the base, the *Standschreitsstatue* form with back-pillar and the Egyptian staff in one hand. But even some of these are not quite standard Egyptian: the arm postures are somewhat odd for Late Period royal statues and perhaps dictated by Assyrian models (Wasmuth 2017, 107); and the uplifting hands of the figures in the subject ovals are definitely a Persian iconographic feature. And the object's overall visual impact is decidedly Persian because the figure wears unmistakably Persian dress. It is true that we do not know what was on

5 2.110: "Many years later the priest of Hephaestus [Ptah] refused to let Darius the Persian erect a statue in front of this group of statues [sc. of Sesostris, his wife and four sons], arguing that his achievements did not yet match those of Sesostris the Egyptian.... They say that Darius conceded the point." That Sesostris famously erected stelae in foreign places (Hdt. 2.102–106) adds piquancy – or is just another aspect of the constructed parallel between him and Darius.

6 I assume, *pace* Yoyotte (2009), after Bresciani (1998), that the statue was at Heliopolis-*On*, not Heliopolis-*Pithom* (Tel el Maskutah). The alternative view puts it with the Canal stelae (and other Canal monuments). Bresciani only poses this as a possibility, and acknowledges that Heliopolis-*On* is also possible. Wasmuth (2016) 209 and (2017) 102, 120–121 regards the location as a matter of speculation. The Psammetichus statue (found in March 2017) is the largest known Late Period statue. Piye (founder of the 25th dynasty) also sought legitimation at Heliopolis: Cairo Museum 48862: Lichtheim (1980) 76–77; Grimal (1981) 130–139 §19. Hdt. 2.176 reports that Amasis, who usurped the throne from Psammetichus's descendant Apries and established a new royal family (albeit within Manetho's 26th dynasty), erected a colossal statue at the Ptah sanctuary in Memphis. Still, in Amasis' reign "Héliopolis joue un rôle privilégié comparé aux autres villes de province": Graef (2011) 162. See also n. 17 below.

7 The conviction of Keesling (2017) 843 that this must have been a statue of Zeus seems misplaced.

his head. There is an Artaxerxes III stater from 340s Cilicia on which he sits on a Levantine throne, holds a Cilician staff, wears Persian court dress but has an Egyptian crown.[8] But I hesitate to think this a good reason to imagine Darius with Egyptian or even Egypto-Iranian headgear.[9]

Readers of the cuneiform text would discover its blunt characterisation of the statue as proof of the king's control of Egypt;[10] and readers of the hieroglyphs would find some pure Persian titulary stuck into the middle of more traditional Egyptian tropes. This Persian character chimes with the Sesostris story, which pits a Persian statue against an Egyptian one. The focus there is, of course, on achievements rather than character of representation; but the Susa Statue does make statements about Darius' achievements both pictorially and in the presence in both cuneiform and hieroglyphs of the claim to be "king on this great earth"/"supreme lord of the earth." The Memphite priests' critique could almost be a response to what they perceived to be the emptiness such claims.

In Babylonia there was an issue about royal quasi-divinisation. In Egypt Darius was more of a god anyway (in Egyptian eyes),[11] so if the statue is to reveal anything of more than local significance, we need a new twist. In pursuit of this I note five points.

(1) The idea of pharaoh as god survives on the statue: Darius is not only Atum's son, "son of Re, engendered by Atum" and "living image of Re" but also "perfect god," and "son of the god's father Hystaspes";[12] and the "living royal *ka*"

8 Wasmuth (2016) 226 fig. 4, Wasmuth (2017) 200–206.

9 Stronach (1972) 243. The Canal Stelae are more evenly Persian and Egyptian, though (as with Statue) the hieroglyphic text is longer. In the case of the Statue that is partly, but only partly, a product of the design implications of the need for three cuneiform versions. It requires gymnastics to be read by contrast with the hieroglyphs [Briant (1999) 109], but that is really just a product of different writing systems.

10 The order of the components of the cuneiform text (DSab) *prima facie* diverges from normal formulaic expectations to highlight this claim: Herrenschmidt (1977) 37. (An alternative explanation is that §2 and §3 have simply been inadvertently put in the wrong order.)

11 The situation is not straightforward. Baines (1998) 22: "The king is not himself identical with any one deity. Unlike deities in the full sense, he does not have an ultimate being in the domain of the gods, of which his earthly being might be a limited manifestation; rather, for the rest of humanity he is a limited manifestation of the world of the gods. There exists a concept of kingship (*nswyt*) that can be set against any incumbent holder of the office; this concept relates strongly to the passage between generations and to the world of the dead. Individual kings aspired to become deities in the full sense in the next world. In this world they were not gods in the same sense as the major gods of the pantheon." For criticism of the view that Egyptians thought the office of king divine, but the king himself mortal, see Quack (2010).

12 This last phrase can also be restored in the Tel el-Maskutah canal stela: Klotz (2015) 280.

(fundamental to royal divinity) appears explicitly in an invocation of Amun-Re at Hibis.[13]

(2) An image at Hibis of the suppression of Apophis (symbol of disorder) adapts a traditional pharaoh-smiting-enemies trope (where the enemies should be human) and rather bizarrely (since Seth is normally one of the representatives of disorder) pictures the smiter as a Horus-headed anthropomorph but labels it as "Seth, great in power"; this is tantamount to presenting the divine Darius as a Horus-Seth amalgam – or, given an Oasis tradition of picturing Seth with a falcon head, just as Seth.[14] This is certainly novel – perhaps a response to Darius' foreign ethnicity, as Seth is a god of foreigners, rather than a piece of covert priestly or artistic dissidence.[15] Darius' pharaonic divinity was thus the object of non-formulaic attention, but in this case at least what emerges does not involve a cultic response.

(3) Worship of a living king or statues of a living king *is* attested in the Saite era,[16] so this would not be a complete novelty. But the Statue is *prima facie* not a cult object but a proof of Darius' control of Egypt and a monument that will "make Darius' *ka* eternally remembered with his father Atum, the Heliopolitan father of the two lands, Re-Harakhte."[17] Ladynin 2011 finds an element of cult activity here by assimilating the statue to votive statues in the Karnak cache, and claiming that the point was to insinuate Darius into the temple's rituals and secure him a share of Atum's food-offerings. The "eternal memory of Darius' *ka* with Atum" has a close parallel in a Karnak votive for a royal prince (Sheshonq),[18] but it is not clear that anything fundamentally

13 Statue: Kuhrt (2007) 478 (b). Hibis: Lorton (1994) 169. The king is identical with the living royal *ka*, without it no one is king, and it is what makes him divine. See Bell (1985).

14 Sternberg el-Hotabi and Aigner (2006) 543; Wasmuth (2016) 213–215; Wasmuth (2017) 235–238.

15 Wasmuth (2017) 238, 257. There are features of the royal titulary on the Statue which suit a foreign or usurper pharaoh keen to assert legitimacy: Wasmuth (2017) 112–113. The encyclopaedic record of religious lore (see n. 4 above) may also be a type of response to foreign rule.

16 Meulenaere (2011) nos. 1, 13, 22 and 24. Apart from no. 13 (P. Rylands IX 16.7–8) the evidence is from the titles of individuals who were prophets of a king (no. 1) or of statues of a king (nos. 22, 24).

17 Re-Harakhte is an aspect of Re's identity as the sun. The Heliopolis connection recalls the exceptional invocation of Apis-Atum "he who grants all life" on the Apis-stelae of Cambyses and Darius: Krebsbach (2011) 97. This suggests that the historic importance of Heliopolis for kingship and royal legitimacy was noted by Persians – and strengthens the case for Heliopolis-*On* as the statue's initial home.

18 Karnak cache: Goyon and Cardin (2004). Sheshonq: K635; Goyon and Cardin (2004) 44–45, 94–97. "O prophêtes, pères divins de la Demeure d'Amon, si vous desirez une vie dont l'étendue n'ait pas de limite, commémorez mon *ka* au côté de mon seigneur en tant que (celui d') un privilégié assurement véridique" (94).

novel is happening in cultic terms. Ladynin suggests that the intention was to secure Darius posthumous benefits, even though it is assumed he will not be interred in Egypt – in other words there is a novel angle because the pharaoh is non-Egyptian. But that does not diminish the banality of the essential idea that a statue in a temple can be at a minimum a residuary recipient of food offerings. The Karnak votives characteristically explicitly provide for food and other offerings for the *ka* of the honorand, and such offerings also appear in the Sheshonq text (though that text *is* in many ways dissimilar to the general run of other Karnak items), whereas there are no such references in the Susa Statue.

(4) Next some Greek evidence: the general ignorance of Egyptian royal divinity in classical era Greek sources (which matches the view of some Egyptologists that ordinary Late Period Egyptians had little active sense of the king as god[19]) contrasts not only with Hecataeus' early Hellenistic euhemerist explanation of why Egyptians honour the kings as gods[20] but also with Diodorus' report (which may come from Hecataeus as well) that Darius was the only king the Egyptian addressed as a *theos* while alive (1.95). Diodorus also knows of Darius as a lawgiver, which is certainly authentic,[21] so perhaps a sense that something changed in perceptions of royal divinity has some basis in reality too.

(5) But the closest to a direct sign is the unprepossessing funerary stele of an ordinary Egyptian, Pediusipre, who worships "the Good God, Lord of the Two Lands, Darius" in the form of a hawk.[22] What is remarkable here is that the hawk is said to be Darius (not Horus) but figures where one expects a god of the pantheon. That arguably entails a real identification of Darius and Horus, because Horus is what can supply the afterlife that the worshipper is seeking from him (Ladynin 2011: 13). This is certainly unusual. The trouble is that it is so unusual that one wonders whether it can really be the sole surviving sign of a more general *official* development.

So, the search for an Egyptian analogy to the possible pushing of the boundaries of royal divinity in Babylonia produces no unequivocal result. Does the Statue's apparent relocation from Heliopolis to Susa help?

Ladynin's view yields a novel explanation: it was removed after the 486 revolt because Egyptians regarded it as a cult object. Removal of statues of

19 Collins (2014) 843.

20 Hecat. Abd. 264 F25 = Diod. 1.90.2–3.

21 Kuhrt (2007) 125 (4.14[b]).

22 Berlin 7493. See Wasmuth (2017) 245–246 and fig. 53(a).

a defeated enemy's gods was standard practice, an assertion of control over those gods or even a bid to rescue them from a putatively malign environment. Export of the Susa Statue would be an odd example, because the god/statue in question was in one way Persian, but it could still be part of an ordinary pattern. Other explanations connecting the removal to the revolt are not very satisfying (none has become canonical)[23] and postulating a sudden belated decision that it would look nice in the Susa Gateway seems arbitrary.[24] (Nor should one forget the possibility that there was no removal in a saliently strong sense of the word at all: see n. 23 above). But I doubt that the neatness of Ladynin's explanation (for which Xerxes' seizure of the golden statue in Babylon might be a parallel: see p. 47 above) quite justifies the premise it entails, i.e., the statue's significant *cult* status. Herodotus' story about Sesostris probably discloses that the location of royal statues was a significant issue, but its character precludes exact identification of the underlying reality. There is certainly *an* interesting story here: Herodotus and the Heliopolis connection guarantee that. But whether it is one that involves adjustments to the conception or practice of royal divinity remains unclear.

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23 During the revolt: e.g., Hinz (1975), Yoyotte (2009) 276; Ladynin doubts the practicality and notes the implicit surrender involved. Before the revolt: Razmjou (2002), who assumes the statue would have been destroyed if it was still in Egypt during the 480s revolt, could not have been removed once the revolt started and so must have been moved before the revolt (perhaps in Darius' reign) to be installed in the monumental gateway, perhaps as planned all along. This is also the view of Perrot and Ladiray (1974). – If there were signs of damage to the statue that could not have been inflicted in the 330s, they would establish that the statue left Heliopolis after the revolt. But in the absence of deliberate damage to the back (which were inaccessible *in situ* in Susa) this is not the case. That the cartouches of Darius' name on the front and the base are the only areas of damage to the hieroglyphic text could suggest an Egyptian perpetrator; but even Macedonians could have picked out the royal name.

24 Also perhaps arbitrary is postulating that it was one of several identical statues, and the intention was always to have one in Susa. But it is arguably a less bad version of arbitrary. Razmjou rejects the idea that the Susa statue was an export-copy of a statue created for Heliopolis because a copy made for the Susa location would not have bothered with details that are in fact on the back of the Susa statue: (2002) 86–87. This is doubtfully cogent. In general proofs that the statue was not made for the Susa location do not disprove that it was a copy (made in Egypt) for export, because there is no guarantee that in such a scenario an order would have been put in for non-exact location-specific copies. This was essentially an Egypt-located item. If anyone wanted a copy, they could perfectly well have wanted an exact copy. Everything depends on their precise motivation, which we cannot independently identify. One of the attractions of making a copy might be that it could be despatched through the canal and around Arabia as a demonstration of the newly empowered contact route.

3 Royal Rhetoric in the Heartland Religious Environment

Let us now metaphorically follow the statue to the heartland.

The religious world of the Persepolis Fortification Archive is one in which (a) the largest resource-allocations go to ritual events not nominally linked with a particular deity,[25] (b) the largest allocation linked with a particular deity is for Humban, an Elamite god, who is around three times better resourced than Ahuramazda, whose own level of resource is comparable with the god Mišdušis (which means "giving reward") and a depersonalised divine collective known as Mišebaka (literally "all gods"),[26] and (c) the total number of resourced deities is large. These deities are described by Wouter Henkelman as "deities of (Indo-)Iranian and Elamite descent in a Persian pantheon" (2011: 98), because there is no sign that administrators made any real distinctions between historico-linguistically Elamite and Persian gods; the coalescence of the two exemplifies, indeed could be ethnogenetically important for, the special identity of what we think of as "the Persians." This world also contains temples. They were economic locations,[27] rarely encountered in the Fortification archive because part of an economy largely distinct from the system recorded in that archive. The religious landscape is thus richly polytheistic (something that in Mark Garrison's view is also reflected in Persepolitan sealstone design[28]) and has a distinct institutional structure that would have been very visible to "Persians," even if it is barely visible to us.[29]

In these circumstances, the royal Ahuramazda and the henotheistic discourse accompanying him is peculiar, something deliberately created by Darius almost in defiance of the "ordinary" background. In contrast, but not entirely in disjunction, if it is true that Elamite ideas about Humban influenced the conception of Ahuramazda as royal god,[30] Darius deliberately repositioned divine empowerment of royal authority within the Elamito-

25 *Šip*, *lan*, *šumar*, *bašur*; *kušukum* also scores quite high. There is now at least one text linking *lan* and the deity Napiriša (Fort. 1316–101: see Henkelman (2017) 274–276, 283–287, 320–328), and there may be two more: Henkelman (2017) 324. But this is still a tiny proportion of the texts dealing with *lan*.

26 Henkelman (2018) 817. Humban's representation nearly equals that of all (Indo-)Iranian gods together. The one hint that Ahuramazda is special is that he is almost always named first if more than one deity is named: Jacobs (2017) 256.

27 Henkelman (2017) 287–290; Henkelman (2018) 819–820.

28 Garrison (2017a) 224.

29 On this landscape in general see Henkelman (2008), and (succinctly) Henkelman (2018) 816–822.

30 A view mooted by Henkelman (2011) 97 and foreshadowed by Boyce (1982) 27–28, for whom Humban provided a model for Ahuramazda's emergence as the highest of the Ahuras.

Iranian Persian pantheon – a repositioning that, whatever the bureaucrats' culture-blindness, looks like a shift from Elamite to Iranian, and so in line with another ideological novelty, viz. celebration of Aryan identity.[31] He also produced an overt discourse that was more singularly focused on the king-empowering deity than was the case for Elamite kings or perhaps for Cyrus and Cambyses. It cannot be stressed too much that we have no idea what homeland royal discourse looked like under those two kings: we only know that in Babylonia Cyrus posed as the empowered agent of Marduk and in Egypt Cambyses was the son of Re and had diverse engagements with Neith of Sais (positive according to Udjahorresnet) and the bull-god Apis (positive according to Egyptian monuments, negative according to Herodotus).[32] Back in Pasargadae they might have looked to Humban, but, if so, there is no knowing how exclusively they might have privileged him. If the four-winged genie originally faced an image of the king, it could have been part of an iconography of god-king interaction that had nothing to do with Humban.[33]

Just as Ahuramazda is a deliberate choice (whatever may have been Darius' reasons for making it[34]), so there are deliberate choices in the rhetoric of royal statements.

Royal texts primarily adopt a favour-of-external-god model.[35] But there *are* also hints that king and god have a more intimate relationship, even that the king has some sort of divine quality. Both king and God are "great,"[36] and just as Ahuramazda is the greatest of gods,[37] so the king is implicitly the greatest of kings (and perhaps of mortals[38]) – for Xerxes as crown-prince is "greatest after Darius" (XPf). When the subjects "obey" the king, the word used argu-

31 See Henkelman (2017) 612–613; Jacobs (2017) 253. See also Hutter (2015).

32 Cyrus and Marduk: Kuhrt (2007) 70–74 (3.21). Cambyses and Egyptian gods: Hdt. 3.27–29; Kuhrt (2007) 118–119 (4.11), 122–124 (4.12–13).

33 Garrison (2009). Perhaps the winged-Darius dream in Hdt. 1.209 is a distant reflection (with king and presumed divinity confused): Almagor (2017) 38.

34 A genuine sense of debt to a god who happened to be his favourite? An entirely calculating dynastic rebadging for which Ahuramazda was the most suitable choice? We cannot tell.

35 There is no single comprehensive publication of the trilingual (Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian) corpus of cuneiform royal inscriptions. All the Old Persian texts appear (with German translation) in Schmitt (2009), and his bibliography provides references to editions of the Elamite and Akkadian versions of individual texts (and to the Aramaic version of the Behistun text). The translations in Lecoq (1997) draw attention to some of the divergences between the various versions.

36 Ahn (1992) 182; Almagor (2017) 34, 39.

37 *Maϑišta*: DPh, DSf, DSp, DH.

38 If DSf §5 is correctly restored by Schmitt (2009) 129 as saying that Ahuramazda chose Darius "his man (*martiya*) in the whole world", it formally affirms the king's mortal status. It is a moot point whether the "Persian man" of DNa §4 designates the King.

ably entails presentation of oneself before a god (Pirart 2002). DSk says "I am Ahuramazda's, he is mine." XPh speaks of the law (*dāta*) of Ahuramazda, uniquely echoing more common allusions to the *dāta* of the king. DPd says Persia feels no fear of others by the will of Ahuramazda *and of me* (*vašnā Auramazdāhā manacā*) – a startling adaptation of the numerous invocations of the *vašna* of Ahuramazda (by himself) as what empowers the king's actions and achievements.[39] Texts like these are exceptional insights into a conception of the relationship between god and king that mostly remains in the background but is perhaps always part of the picture. The hints here (and perhaps elsewhere[40]) are mostly subtle, but I shall return later to the one item that is not.

Royal monumental icons primarily figure the king as pre-eminent in a human universe, whose members carry him (a trope that has Elamite precedents), approach him with at most a slight bow and sometimes mouth-covering (again with Elamite precedents), or just stand around in his presence.[41] Hints at a quasi-divine king are again subtle and work by traditional iconographic association. The king is physically larger than anyone else, even if not everyone else is equally small.[42] On the Apadana subjects are brought before him by hand as before a god,[43] some individuals bow to him, albeit slightly, again

39 Tuplin (2017) 98 was wrong to suggest that that is no more striking than the epistolary formula "may your wishes be fulfilled by the gods and the king." There is a parallel in the unusual assertion of joint effort (*zaumma*/*zaumin*) by King and Ahuramazda in DB_e I 51–55 (DB §14 fin), noted by Henkelman (2017) 317–318. Since DPd only exists in OP, we do not know how the joint *vašna* of Ahuramazda and Darius would have appeared in Elamite. But since "effort" is the standard Elamite version of *vašna*, it would naturally have been like DB_e l.c. This Elamite usage does not establish the meaning of OP *vašna*, variously translated "will," "power," "greatness" or "grace" (Lincoln 2012: 135, with references to earlier literature).

40 Word play designed to make Ahuramazda and the king closer: DB 1.11–12 juxtaposes Ahuramazda and *adam* (I am), DB 1.18–19 Ahuramazda and "my subject" (Almagor 2017: 32). The King creates a perfect cosmos (*fraša*) at Susa, part of a larger discourse about restoration of order in a fractured cosmos, a task for which the king has been created: Lincoln (2012) 50–51, 191–194, 200, 204, 369–372.

41 Root (1979) is the classic account. Garrison (2013) provides an excellent summary. The primary relevant monuments are at Behistun, Persepolis and Naqš-i Rustam.

42 Note that the human figures behind Darius in the Behistun icon are smaller than him but larger than the defeated enemy; so, is there a sliding scale of quasi-divinity? The same applies to Naqš-i Rustam. On the Apadana too there are three grades (King, Crown Prince, everyone else), but there at least the extra larger-than-normal size is also a royal figure.

43 This feature underpins the affirmation of a significant creative link between the Apadana scene and the Elamite representation of worship of gods at Kurangun in Álvarez-Mon (2018) 839.

as before a god, and the incense burners are appropriate to a holy spot. Elsewhere, when the king is held aloft, that brings him closer to the divine sphere.[44] Meanwhile the primary favour-of-external god model is on the face of it represented by the winged-disk figure, to which I shall also return later.

There is much that is elusive or allusive here. It is well known that both texts and monuments avoid overt presentation of warfare, preferring peace-and-order to the business of conquest or suppression of trouble at the imperial margins, and the elusiveness of the quasi-divine king *might* similarly reflect a preference for a nice balance between the larger-than-life king and the co-operative world he rules as against stress on the distance between a more-than-human ruler and his subjects – even if the balance may be differently calibrated in different iconographical settings.[45] But whereas an iconography

44 The Naqš-i Rustam fire-altar apparently constructs the king simply as worshipper – unless it is the royal fire and merely in the presence of the king's intercourse with the winged disk figure; in that case it represents something royal that might be worshipped. More debatable ideas: the Shamash stars on Darius' crown at Behistun: Root (2010); assimilation of Darius and six secular helpers (Naqš-i Rustam) with Ahuramazda and the six Ameša Spentas whom Ahuramazda created as agents through whom to create sky, earth, water, plants, animals, men (*Yasna* 1.1) and Order: Shahbazi (1980) 122–125, Boyce (1982) 92–94, Boyce (1983). (Representations of the royal hero fighting an animal or monster and of the lion-bull symplegma do not *in se* relate to the king's ontological status.) Away from monumental items, the sixth- century designers of the daric/*siglos* worked in a world where an anthropomorphic figure on a coin was normally non-human; and the *Knielauf* posture of Type III archers might evoke the more-than-human Heracles: Tuplin (2014) 143–145. The suggestion in Gitler (2011) 110–111 that the Samarian coin images of a Persian king seated on a "swan throne" that appear in Meshorer and Qedar (1999) nos. 6, 13–14, 40, 47, 100 represent an actual local cult-image that assimilated the king and Zeus-Ahuramazda is not easy to accept. At most the label ZEUS on one version of the icon may suggest that someone in Samaria perceived the king as god-like, rather in the manner of the anonymous Hellespontine of Hdt. 7.56.

45 Both on the Apadana and at Naqš-i Rustam the king is focal in a broad image of empire, embracing both Persian and foreign subjects. On the Apadana the overall effect is more secular than religious (though the latter is not lacking), and the king's singularity is even (slightly) diminished by the presence of a Crown Prince. At Naqš-i Rustam, by contrast, the king is associated with a transcendent sphere, both by being uplifted (by subjects who hold him up instead of approaching in procession) and by interaction with a religious site (the stepped fire-altar) and divine images (winged disk figure, sun and moon) – the principle of divinization by association that Ornan (2007) postulates in an Assyrian context and Fales (2013) is inclined to resist. Here, then, the effect is more religious than secular; cf. Garrison (2017b) 404, 410 on a consistent blurring of the distinction between the king and the numinous/divine. Perhaps this is not unfitting on a tomb as opposed to an audience hall. The Behistun image presents a smaller universe defined by the events of 522–521: as such it is decidedly secular/political, but the king's interaction with the divine (the winged disk figure) is also prominent.

of warfare does exist in other media,[46] there is next to no sign of a *distinct* and overt iconography of quasi-divine-king-subject relations: a single seal-stone image (PFUTS 305) of a small figure apparently kneeling before the king is a slender reflection of putative regular full-scale abasement before a ruler with divine aura,[47] especially as the kneeler may be a woman and/or a prisoner.[48]

I return now to a piece of royal text, one in which Xerxes reports the suppression of unacceptable gods. I cite two versions, one Elamite, the other Old Persian:

> And among the lands there was (a place) where formerly (the people) made (for) their *daivā* their sacrificial feast (*šip*). Then by the effort of Ahuramazda I devastated that place of worship of *daivā* and I placed *kiten* upon them, lest the *daivā* their sacrificial feast be celebrated. (He then made *šip* for Ahuramazda.) (XPh_{elam})
> And among these lands was one where previously *daivā* were worshipped. Then by the will of Ahuramazda I destroyed these *daivā*-sites and ordered (*patiyazbayam*) 'The *daivā* shall no longer be worshipped.' Wherever previously the *daivā* were worshipped, there I have worshipped Ahuramazda at the correct time and with correct ceremonial. (XPh_{op})

The interesting thing here is that in the Elamite version Xerxes places *kiten* upon the enemy (or perhaps their gods – or perhaps both?) to prevent a sacrificial feast being made for them. *Kiten* is a attribute of Elamite kings granted by the god Humban (whom we have already met), a sort of divine aura (under which he stands) or weapon (of which he avails himself). Received from god, it is continuously available to the king *qua* king. This is the text-corpus' most explicit allusion to a model in which divine empowerment is not simply a matter of repeated acts of divine grace – but it only appears in Elamite: in Old Persian Xerxes simply issues an order.

Actually, the situation is not entirely simple. The word used, *patiyazbayam* (etymologically "proclaim"[49]), does not recur in the OP corpus; and we get the

46 Tuplin (2020).

47 Rollinger (2011) 23–40.

48 The figure's pig-tail suggests a woman (in the light of women in the Greco-Persian seal repertoire), though a similar feature is found on an apparent Horus figure on PFS 0038*. A continuous straight feature running from the king's right hand to the small figure's lower body could be a rope or a poor representation of the king's staff. It is also not certain that the figure is kneeling; the alternative is a standing figure of child-like stature.

49 *Prima facie* from *pati-* = "towards" (cf. Greek *pros*) + *zbaya-* = "call."

same phenomenon in the Akkadian version, where the verb, *paqāru*, is also absent in other royal inscriptions. Selection of these words suggests that the Elamite author's reference to *kiten* is not casual: all three authors are making choices to mark the situation as special. There are at least two other signs of a special situation: Xerxes' celebration of Ahuramazda on the previous site of *daiva*-worship is described with a unique OP phrase *rtaca brazmaniya* (simply transliterated into Elamite and Akkadian and so of debated meaning); and Xerxes adjures his successor to celebrate Ahuramazda in this way and respect "this *dāta* (law) that Ahuramazda has enacted" – the only time *dāta* is not something enacted by the King. Apparently, the suppression of *daiva* worship had a special ideological quality as a context in which royal power was exercised to ensure propriety. The Elamite version exploits an Elamite way of conceiving royal activity. The associations of Akkadian *paqāru* are with the staking and challenging of legal claims (perhaps fittingly in a stand-off between religious codes).[50] What the special resonance of the OP word may be, if any, we cannot tell for sure. In any event, the essence of the context is the worship of wrong gods – i.e., it is a religious issue. This is not a context in which to muddy the distinction between man and god in the person of the king, but it *is* one in which the king's divinely empowered right to interfere in religious activity deserves special capture, even though his success is *also* as usual ascribed to the *vašna* of Ahuramazda. Articulation of the king's use of a divinely bestowed quality is an appropriate rhetoric. But (unless *patiyazbayam* had *very* special connotations[51]) it was a rhetoric for which only Elamite had a specific tool ready to hand.

We must now approach the other deferred item, the winged disk figure, found both on royal monuments and elsewhere.[52] The prevalent interpretations are that the icon is *either* Ahuramazda (just as in the Assyrian equival-

50 CAD 12.130–135, esp. 133 (*paqāru* 3). Note Henkelman (2008) 368, n. 861: "As M. W. Stolper remarks (pers.comm.) the usage of the form *apteqir* in this context is actually quite extraordinary and not really explained. In legal use it ought to mean rather 'lodge a (justified, successful) complaint.'"

51 Such a claim is made by Kellens (2017) 18–19, citing Kellens (1994) 125–126, who says that the word's underlying sense is "anrufen," that it belongs in a religious context, and that it should mean "revoquer l'invitation sacrificielle." By contrast, Schmitt (2014) 294 (s.v. *zbā-*) translates "anordnen" and rejects any connection with a Vedic word meaning "(an)rufen." (He does not refer to Kellens.) Those inexpert in Indo-Iranian philology will hesitate to take sides, but may incline by default to the simpler explanation.

52 The winged disk/ring plus bust-figure exists alongside (sometimes literally) the winged disk/ring without bust-figure and the bust figure in crescent or circle (without wings). All interpretations of the first of these in the long run will have to make sense in the light of the other two and of a full understanding (not yet achieved) of the iconographical syntax

ent it was Assur or Shamash) *or* the royal *khvarenah* (*xᵛarənah*), an Iranian concept visible in the Avesta and strong in Sasanian times – the royal version of the spiritual force that motivates every category of being to fulfil its appropriate *raison d'être*, bestowed by god (in the Avesta this is done by Mithra and perhaps Verethragna) and a necessary pre-requisite for kingship.[53] *Prima facie* if it represents Ahuramazda, it reinforces the interaction between king and god but also makes the king quite separate from the divine. If it represents royal *khvarenah*, the king is not literally deified, but the transcendent quality associated with him virtually is, since it is visualised in a form that others used for a god. I shall not rehearse the strengths and weaknesses of each view.[54] Instead I note that some favour a compromise[55] – the figure is Ahuramazda and the winged solar disk symbolizes *khvarenah* (etymologically associated with the sun) – and I make two further points.

First, there is a certain resemblance between the winged disk figure and the King. They are by no means identical at Behistun, and not entirely so on Darius' tomb, but do become more so in later royal monuments.[56] The figure is a transcendent entity which tends to mirror the king. This is not to do with sonship or descent (concepts that are both *prima facie* absent from all Achaemenid sources[57]) and, if it is a visual equivalent of the "I am Ahuramazda's, he

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of their various use. Still, the multiplicity does tend to favour the idea that figure and (winged) disk might have separate referents.

53 Ahuramazda: e.g., Root (1979) 169–176; Lecoq (1984); Jacobs (1991) (but conflated with sun-god). *Khvarenah* e.g., Shahbazi (1974), (1980); Jong (1997) 299–301; Stausberg (2002) 177–180; Silverman (2016) 176–178.

54 See, briefly, Tuplin (2017) 99–101.

55 Balzer (2007) 130; Battesti (2011) 180; Almagor (2017) 37. Henkelman (2017) 319, n. 75 envisages something similar, with the winged disk drawing on ideas of royal numinosity associated with Mesopotamian *melammu* (cf. n. 62) and Elamite *kiten*. Garrison (2017a) 193–200 declines to make even a compromise decision: the "exact semantic referent" of the symbol remains elusive and was perhaps "open to a range of meanings depending upon its visual context" (199–200). Silverman (2016) 178 finds suggestions of deliberate polyvalence "rather postmodern."

56 Garrison (2013) 576–577 stresses the distinctive (and distinct) character of both the royal crown and that of the winged disk figure at Behistun. In general, the Behistun icon is "assertively Assyrianizing in composition and select aspects of iconography and style."

57 Divine sonship is quite absent, by contrast with Egypt (where it is standard) or Assyria, where there are hints: Tuplin (2017) 102. But Jacobs (2017) 258–262, esp. 260 understands Ahuramazda as the "Ahnherr des Achämenidenhauses" (Achaemenes being his actual son), in which case Darius would be a descendant of Ahuramazda. Aside from the iconographic similarity of king and winged disk figure, the idea is rather heavily dependent on Greek texts (notably Ael. *NA* 12.21) – which does not make it incorrect. (Aelian does produce the report that the child Achaemenes was fed by an eagle in conjunction with

is mine" trope in DSk, it is one that adds a *Doppelganger*-like dimension.[58] Since there are Neo-Assyrian analogies for and an Achaemenid-era Greek assertion of the idea that a king is the image of a god,[59] it is not a surprising dimension, especially as visual assimilation between god and winged disk figure can also be found in the Neo-Assyrian version.[60] But in itself it does not determine whether the figure is Ahuramazda (a god) or the *khvarenah* (an entity that could be worshiped, so effectively a god).[61] Still, there is *some* element of royal divinity here.

Second, one weakness of the *khvarenah* interpretation is the absence of the concept from royal discourse and its general elusiveness across all Achaemenid-related sources.[62] Leaving the latter aside for the moment, how cogently does the absence of *khvarenah* in royal verbal texts preclude its appearance in iconographic ones?

If the absence is because of the absence of concept, the answer is easy: it is not there because it did not exist. But if the notion already existed (and its presence in the form *farnah* as an element in personal names makes that hard to deny outright), Darius *could* have spoken of Ahuramazda bestowing

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a story about Gilgamos = Gilgamesh, so he is unusually close to Ancient Near Eastern material hereabouts.) But it is not the line taken in royal inscriptions.

58 Cf. Llewellyn-Jones (2015) 217, for whom the king "encodes in his appearance the best physical attributes of the anthropomorphic divinity" and king and god are "one another's doppelganger." Root (1979) 171 speaks of a "symbiotic relationship." (The same word is used by Podella (1996) 140 of the link between the Assyrian king and the winged-disk representation.) Kienast (1996) reckons the chariots of "Zeus" (Ahuramazda?) and the king in royal processions bespeak a ritual in which the King performs as the god's representative or substitute (*Stellvertreter*).

59 Cole and Machinist (1998) xiii, xxii, n. 12; Machinist (2006) 162–163, 170–173, 175–182. Since "image" and "statue" are both *ṣalmu*, the king's being a "image of god" has a bearing on treatment of his statue as divine. Non-Assyrian subjects were also expected to see the royal statue as divine: Tadmor (1994) 138–140 (10'–11'), 176–178 (16'–17'), 188 (r.14–15). Greek assertion: see below. The same applied to the Egyptian pharaoh: Tutankhamun was actually named "perfect image of Amun."

60 Almagor (2017) 38, n. 127, citing Loud and Altman (1938) pl. 38 and Ornan (2007) 169.

61 I leave a possible further *indicium* until I come to the Greek text in question.

62 A single text preserves the currency of *kiten*. We cannot preclude that *melammu* was current somewhere in the Achaemenid environment. (On *melammu* see also Chpt. 1, sect. 5.2 and n. 42.) But does that argument work for *khvarenah*? Despite the Elamo-Iranian foundations of the imperial people's identity, the cultural imprint of Achaemenid era royal texts (an internal source) and of the record provided by external observers (Greek sources) is fundamentally Iranian: we have much more right to think that *khvarenah* will show up, unless we believe that it was a notion *only* entertained by elements of Iranian society wholly unrepresented in the historical record because entirely remote from the *ethnoclasse dominante*.

khvarenah. But, since we cannot assume kingship's dependence on *khvarenah* was so powerfully felt c. 500 as at some other moments in Iranian history or so powerfully felt that naming the concept was indispensable, Darius might have chosen to be silent about bestowal of *khvarenah* and subsume it under Ahuramazda's bestowal of kingship and/or the empowering *vašna* of the god.[63]

Would that be consistent with *khvarenah* appearing iconographically but not verbally? The natural answer is yes, *but only if it appeared in conjunction with Ahuramazda*. Given the verbal insistence on Ahuramazda and the status of that insistence as a very deliberate piece of positioning in the religious landscape, it is hard to see why Ahuramazda would *not* appear visually; and, since what we see *prima facie* repeats an existing trope for representing an empowering god, there seems no reason not to accept that *prima facie* conclusion: it is in fact a natural consequence of Ahuramazda having been selected to function as a normal sort of Ancient Near Eastern legitimizing god. This does not preclude the possibility that the image was a combination of Ahuramazda and the *khvarenah* he bestows, whether that was symbolized by the ring held by the figure or by the winged (sun) disk (though only the former enacts the idea of bestowal), but we are not *required* to entertain that possibility.[64]

The only escape from this logic is to assume that the contemporary notion of *khvarenah* was both strong enough to need acknowledgement and wholly dissociated from bestowal by a god – so that Ahuramazda rhetoric was categorically incompatible with *khvarenah* rhetoric: on that basis one might say that Darius chose one in texts and the other in pictures.[65] But that makes the *khvarenah* concept so strong as to be virtually equipollent with Ahuramazda. To believe that puts a great burden on all the textual and iconographic sources that are *not* royal discourse. If two distinct but near equal ideas of divine royal empowerment existed (the *vašna* of Ahuramazda; *khvarenah*), then, if one of them was not going to appear in royal texts, can we tolerate it not appearing in non-royal texts either? Support of the full-scale *khvarenah* hypothesis (that the winged disk figure represents *khvarenah* and only *khvarenah*) demands proof that the concept is so *conspicuously* present in other evidence that its

63 So Binder (2008) 244–246.

64 A ring is offered at Behistun, Naqš-i Rustam and Persepolis: Root (1979) pl. 6; Schmidt (1970) pls. 19 22B; Schmidt (1953) pls. 75–79, 103–104, 107, 159–160. The same gesture appears on PFUTS 0273* and other Fortification archive seal images Fortification archive: Garrison and Henkelman (2020) 87–88, 89 n.72.

65 Theoretically one could also postulate a Herodotus-like ban on images of gods (so Ahuramazda could not be represented).

exclusion from *both* forms of royal rhetoric is inconceivable. It is not good enough to say the icon *could* be *khvarenah* and various other sources *could* suggest that concept's availability and that these two *possibilities* reinforce one another into certainty.[66]

4 Image, Light and *Daimōn*: Royal Divine *Aura* in Greek Texts

I am not going to mount a full search for the requisite proof. Instead I present five Greek texts which belong to such a search because they associate the king with the divine but do not make him a god: three certainly come from fourth-century authors and a fourth ultimately from an Alexander historian; the fifth (Plutarch *Themistocles* 29) is of more debatable origin.

In one of these texts the peripatetic philosopher Phanias makes the king "the image of the god who keeps everything safe."[67] The idea of king-as-image-of-god is an authentic ancient Near Eastern idea, as I have already noted. This encourages one to think that the ideas of light and *daimōn* that we shall find in the other texts should be taken seriously, especially as the sources include Theopompus (who knew about Zoroaster and Iranian eschatology) and Ctesias or Dinon who can count as well-informed writers of *Persika*. But we do have to consider the content of the texts before concluding that they offer authentically non-Greek ideas.

In Plutarch *Alexander* 30 there is talk of "seeing [the king's] light."[68] This is not in itself un-Greek, if perhaps poetic and extravagant.[69] But the suggestion that Ahuramazda will re-awaken that light is another matter. What could be a normal metaphor becomes more substantial: the royal light becomes a thing, not just a *façon de parler*. One might debate whether the light is intrinsically divine or only divine because Ahuramazda causes it to shine, but that may

66 Of course, even if such a proof were forthcoming, it would be equally consistent with the weaker Ahuramazda-*khvarenah* combination hypothesis.

67 Phanias ap. Plut. *Them.* 27: "You Greeks, it is said, admire freedom and equality most of all. But for us the best of many fine customs is this one, to honour the king and do him homage (*proskunein*) as an image of the god who keeps the totality of things safe (*eikona theou tou ta panta sōzontos*)."

68 "Neither Stateira, while alive, nor your mother or children lacked any of their former great blessings except to see your light, which Lord Oromazdes will again make shine bright (*ton son horan phōs, ho palin analampsei* [*anapsei*: Powell; *analampseie*: Castiglioni; *anapseie*: Hamilton] *lampron ho kurios Ōromasdēs*), nor after death was she deprived of any funeral adornments."

69 LSJ s.v. *phaos* II.

be a false disjunction and/or one that does not make much difference in the present context. The surest way to undermine belief that there is a genuine Persian idea here would be to find passages in purely Greek contexts where a god does such a thing. Unable currently to report the existence of any such passages, I am inclined to allow Plutarch the benefit of the doubt. Two other considerations reinforce that inclination.

First, this item stands alongside three other Persian features. (i) When Darius hears of Stateira's death he says "Alas, for the *daimōn* of the Persians, if [the queen] must not only be captured in life but denied proper burial in death." The slave replies that all is well, and Darius need not blame the *ponēros daimōn Persōn*. (ii) Later he adjures the slave: "If you are not Macedonizing like the fortune of the Persians, if I Darius am still your master, tell me, as you revere the great light of Mithra and the king's right hand, is this not the least of Stateira's evils that I am lamenting?" (iii) Later still he prays to *theoi genethlioi kai basileioi* that they allow him to restore the fortune (or empire) of the Persians. Plutarch or his source is consistently making the conversation distinctively Persian: reference to Mithra and the king's *dexia* is authentic enough, and articulation of the notion *ponēros daimōn Persōn* does perhaps evoke Ahriman (whereas "alas, the *daimōn* of the Persians" could just be a Hellenism). The context encourages a willingness to take the passage about the king's light seriously.

Secondly, so too does a partial parallel in Aeschylus *Persians*.[70] The chorus say (150–154) the Persian queen is "a light equal to the light that comes from the eyes of the gods"[71] – primarily the light of salvation, but secondarily a divine light. Immediately afterwards they address the queen as wife and mother of a god. Ten lines later her apprehension is that light may no longer shine on Persia's rulers if something bad has happened to the "eye of the household" (i.e., Xerxes). So, the queen (doubly related to a god) is *like* what you might see in the epiphany of a god (though shining eyes are not a common feature of epiphany descriptions[72]), and the king as "eye" (not in itself an un-Greek way to describe something precious) evokes the light-providing divine eyes. Even taken as a whole, the passage certainly falls short of suggesting that a divine light emanates from a Persian king. Still the chorus's gloss on the light-of-salvation is part and parcel of its predilection for seeing divinity in the royal family (one element in a larger dossier about divine or quasi-divine

70 *Cyr.* 4.2.15 by contrast (in which a light shone upon Cyrus) is not perhaps distinctive enough. But see Degen (2019).

71 Garvie (2009) 96. Or more simply "like light from the eyes of gods": Hall (1996) 47.

72 *Il.* 1.200 is an exception.

kings in *Persae*[73]) and exemplifies Edith Hall's observation that Aeschylus' Persians are "extraordinarily partial to ornamental diction related to light and the sun," something perhaps reflecting "Greek appropriation of authentic Persian court language."[74] Does court language reflect a quasi-theological proposition about light and kings? I favour an affirmative answer (and so the discovery of an early indirect parallel for Plutarch), but I acknowledge the possibility of scepticism.

So much for light. The other three texts deal with the king's *daimōn*, and each of them has interesting features.

Plutarch *Themistocles* 29 credits the *daimōn* with agency remote from the king's interior psychology or immediate vicinity: the king's *daimōn* has brought Themistocles from beyond the edge of the empire to the king's palace.[75]

Theopompus reports on what he sees as the toadying behaviour of the Argive mercenary commander Nicostratus.[76] His remarks involve an unusual use of the verb *onomazein*, "to name": to say that Nicostratus names the special table for the king's *daimōn* (so, e.g., calls it the "Table of the King's *Daimōn*") sounds fine in English, but Greek does not normally express that idea with a dative of the thing named for. A close but imperfect parallel from Themistius (some 700 years later) arguably implies Nicostratus literally calls the table "the king's *daimōn*"[77] – which is, I suppose, another thing that might by meant by naming it "for" the *daimōn*. (It sounds slightly odd, but perhaps not much odder than naming a *paradeisos* "Alcibiades" or "Full Happiness."[78]) Theopompus' wording stresses Nicostratus' overt articulation of his intent but avoids

73 Tuplin (2017) 102.

74 Hall (1999) 119.

75 "Moreover, Rhoxanes the chiliarch, when Themistocles approached alongside him – the King being seated and the rest silent – said in an angry undertone: 'Subtle serpent of Greece, the king's *daimōn* has brought you here.'"

76 Theopompus 115 F124 = Athen. 252B: "Every day when he was going to dine he set a separate table ?naming it for the king's *daimōn* (*onomazōn tōi daimoni tōi basileōs*)? and loaded it with grain and other necessities, because he heard that this is what Persians who spent time at court did and thought that he would get more money from the king by toadying in this way (*dia tēs therapeias tautēs*)."

77 Themistius 354B: *tis Alexandrōi nun ton heautou bion eponomazei kathaper Platōni*, i.e., "who dedicates his life to Alexander as to Plato." *Eponomazein* appears because one *calls* oneself a Platonist but not an Alexandrist, though what is said to be named is actually one's way of life (standing for the person because it is the way of life that proves the name appropriate). This is an eccentric use of *eponomazein*. According to normal usage Themistius speaks of giving the name "his own life" to Plato or Alexander.

78 "Alcibiades": Plut. *Alc.* 24. "Vispašiyatiš": PT 49, PT 59; Benveniste (1958) 57–58; Lincoln (2012) 68–69.

any suggestion of a religious offering or quasi-votive dedication: there is no question of even indirect king-worship either by Nicostratus or the Persians he was copying – for the word *therapeia* does not have to be so understood.

The Ctesias/Dinon passage involves word-play and a loaded term.[79] The guests "bend to the ground" (*eis tēn gēn ekupsan*), i.e., look down embarrassed, in response to the *kakodaimonia* of Mithradates' foolish remarks, and Sparamizes then invites them to *proskunein* (bow) to the king's *daimōn*. The verbal game need not cast suspicion on the notion of the king's *daimōn*, indeed it rather follows from it: the author is playing with the pre-existing idea of royal *daimōn*. But what about the *proskunēsis*? Some Greeks knew the practice was not intrinsically religious in Persia, but others let it prompt them to believe Persians thought the king a god.[80] What Plutarch's source intended by *proskunēsis* to the king's *daimōn* is a nice question and, by contrast with what we read in Theopompus, indirect king-worship may be involved. But we should keep in mind that we certainly do not have the actual words of Plutarch's source, whereas we may well have those of Theopompus: so Theopompus may provide more reliable evidence.

It appears, then, that the royal *daimōn* can (i) make something happen far from the king and (ii) be the object of respectful actions in contexts where the king is absent. In fact, the *daimōn* serves as a substitute agent and a substitute object of veneration. (On that view *proskunēsis* should signify whatever it signifies when the king himself is its target.) It is not easy to parallel these ideas when Greeks talk about an individual's *daimōn* in the classical era. Of course, there is not much evidence of them doing so, but that itself makes one wonder whether "the king's *daimōn*" was a natural turn of phrase for Greek authors without an external stimulus.[81] The Persian king's *daimōn* is certainly absent in Aeschylus (though the king can be *isodaimōn*)[82] and in

79 Ctesias or Dinon ap. Plut. *Artox*. 15: "The rest of them, already seeing Mithradates' end and his ill-fortune (*kakodaimonia*), looked at the ground (*eis tēn gēn ekupsan*). Their host (sc. Sparamizes) said, 'My dear Mithradates, let us drink and eat now, revering (*proskunountes*) the king's *daimōn*, and let us set aside talk that is too big for us.'" The word play was drawn to my attention by Almagor (2010) 37, n. 44, though he makes it part of a Dionysiac reading of the scene which I do not find convincing.

80 Tuplin (2017) 102–103. A different view is argued in Bowden (2013).

81 The personal *daimōn* is not unequivocally attested before Plato: Alt (2000) 220–223. Plutarch was interested in the idea in a (Platonist) philosophical context (Alt 2000, 232–238), but there is no sign that this impacted on his reports about the king's *daimōn*.

82 The *palaios daimōn* of *Pers*. 158 is, as Almagor (2011) 35, n. 29 observes, entirely explicable in Greek terms.

Herodotus (it is positively absent in a passage where Cambyses speaks ruefully of the impact a *daimōn* has had upon him[83]), and might be seen as an authentic concept with which Greeks only became familiar at a relatively late date.

So, late Achaemenid era Greeks perhaps believed that Persians not only saw their king as an image of god (an authentic Near Eastern perspective, validated by non-Greek evidence) but also ascribed to him a (divinely sourced) light and a *daimōn* capable of autonomous agency and passive formal respect. Can *these* ideas be authenticated from non-Greek evidence? This brings us back to *khvarenah*.

The royal *khvarenah* connotes light: etymologically it evokes the sun (**hvar*), and translations evoke the brightness of fame or fortune.[84] It is an entity both separate from and intimately associated with the king with whose royalty it is a necessary concomitant. It is a potential object of worship. But it is also a special case of a general thing; everyone has a *khvarenah*. There are obvious resonances with four of our texts.

The five texts may preserve unusual ideas, but they do normalize them. A "light" emanating from the king is banal compared with *khvarenah*, which is other things besides light. *Daimōn* is a wonderfully vague term – one standardly used to avoid identification of a divine power in statements that nonetheless ascribe it effective impact on human experience.[85] Resonances between statements about light or the king's *daimōn* and entirely non-Greek ideas are likely to be imprecise. One sign of this is that they could serve as well or as badly as allusions to Mesopotamian *melammu* or Egyptian *ka* – or even Elamite *kiten*, though perhaps it is a less good fit: it has no known light component, and the locution about putting *kiten* on something does not sit easily with the idea of *daimōn*. That is ironic, as *kiten* is the only one firmly attested as an effective quality of an Achaemenid king – and perhaps the irony is telling: precise and contemporary evidence about a non-Greek concept makes the fit with a potential Greek equivalent weaker.[86] (It is important to keep remembering that, even if the idea of *khvarenah* was in fact current in the Achaemenid environment, we do not independently know exactly how the

83 Hdt. 3.65.

84 Jacobs (1987); Gnoli (1996); Gnoli (1999); Jong (1999) 481–483.

85 Kidd (1995) 218.

86 In these terms we should not reject out of hand the idea that *kiten* could have influenced understanding of the winged disk figure and/or development of the idea of *khvarenah*: Henkelman (2008) 371; Rollinger (2011) 20–22; cf. Gaspa (2017) 158, 161.

relevant people conceived it: we only have Avestan and Sasanian evidence.)[87] In general, light fits better than *daimōn*, but only because light is a less elusive concept. Both arguably fit less well than "image," because "image" is slightly more bounded than "light." "Image" also has the advantage that there is evidence making it relevant to our topic that is contemporary (the Darius statue in Sippar) or near contemporary (Assyro-Babylonian verbal tropes about king as image of god – tropes that, of course, illuminate statue worship) – though the fact that, whatever its cultic status, the Susa Statue is also (in Egyptian terms) an image of a god reminds us again that ideas exist cross-culturally, and that being an image of god may not entail cultic honour of that image. (The conception of the pharaoh as an embodiment or epiphany of the god Horus takes the idea of image in a particular substantive direction but does not in itself lead to direct cult.) The reference to an image of god in Phanias is also more bounded because the king is not just the image of god, but of the god "who preserves everything": a rather particular notion is involved, and one that is not quite congruent with the Greek cult-title *sotēr*. The god's anonymity is tantalising; but, if iconographic interaction between winged disk figure and king reflects the king as image of god, Phanias suggests the figure must rather be Ahuramazda than *khvarenah*.

Different cultures come up with expressions of the not-quite-divine charismatic quality of kings. One cannot expect them to coincide perfectly and so one cannot expect one culture's evocation of another culture's version to be precise unless and until the observing culture approaches the observed culture in an ethnographically and linguistically exact (or pedantic) frame of mind.[88] The multiplicity of conceptions of the divine means that people stick with their own and it may be intrinsically impossible to prove what they are talking about when they speak those of other people: it is structurally inevitable that they resort to inadequate equivalents. Which is perhaps to say that the level of proof necessary to establish a hard-line version of the winged disk figure-*khvarenah* thesis is intrinsically unobtainable.

87 The Sasanian evidence is much later in date. Evidence from the Younger Avesta may not be greatly removed in time from the Achaemenid era, but the whole problem is how far the (Indo)-Iranian environment to which it belongs is relevant for the thought world of south-western Iran.

88 Almagor (2011) 35 observes that a *daimōn* is exclusively affiliated with the person to whom it belongs whereas (royal) *khvarenah* moves from one king to another: this is accurate but not a decisive objection to seeing the king's *daimōn* as an allusion to *khvarenah*.

5 Conclusion

Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus. But negative results are still results. And there are some positives. (1) It is conceivable that there were attempts to adjust practical conceptualisation of the divine king in Babylonia and Egypt: to doubt this is not hyper-sceptical, to propose it not absurd, and it is an interesting proposition to set alongside the undoubted adjustments to temple management. (2) Deliberate choices were made about ideological representation of the king's divine authority – including to play down the king's divine aura in some circumstances and play it up in others. Different choices might also be available in different culturo-linguistic settings for articulation of that aura.[89] (Note that the use of *kiten* in Elamite and the absence of *khvarenah* in OP can only demonstrate that *kiten* and *khvarenah* are different conceptions, not that *khvarenah* was not available.) The bar of proof for the view that royal *khvarenah* was available to Iranians and was all that was represented by the winged disk figure is very high. (3) Four Greek texts may preserve evidence for the idea of *khvarenah*. It is true that it is at best indirect evidence – the odd use of banal Greek ideas (light, *daimōn*) is a loose cultural translation of something alien and distinctive, a reflection of something seen through a glass darkly – but it may be the best sort of evidence we can expect. Knowledge that the idea was available still does not, of course, guarantee that the winged disk figure is nothing but *khvarenah*.

The union of god and king is liable to be an elusive affair in any system that does not decide to assert it outright and mark it with explicitly religious rituals. Even in Egypt, which one is apt to judge a comparatively clear locus for the god-king, things are not quite straightforward. Except inasmuch as its kings were also pharaohs, Achaemenid Iran was certainly well to the other end of the spectrum from Egypt. But in the Achaemenid version of Iranian kingship created by Darius, there was room for the king to be touched by the divine. The extraordinary geopolitical transformation wrought in the space of a single generation and the representational requirements of a bold usurper ensured that there could be no thought of the new Great Power of western Asia turning its back on the tradition of royal exceptionalism. The verbal and visual intimations of the Achaemenid king's more-than-human quality, if subtle, are nonetheless real, and the peculiarly stark reciprocal relationship of king and Ahuramazda ("I am his and he is mine") bound the god to one particular mortal (his artefact in a cosmic narrative) more tightly than to any other human

89 For examples of other choices see Chpt. 6, sect. 1 and n. 28 on superhuman aura or Chpt. 4, sect. 3 and n. 19 on solar halo and the emperor Constantine.

creature. Whatever precise decision we reach about *daimōn*, light and *khvarenah* (and I think it unlikely that the Greek evidence here has *no* indicative force), we are confronted by a distinctive and rather elegant version of divine union.

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CHAPTER 3

Confronting and Uniting with Divinity in Ancient Egypt

Robert K. Ritner

In Israelite tradition, when Moses asked to behold the glory of god, Yahweh turned to him his anthropological backside: "you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:18–23). In Egyptian theology, however, the worshipper may see the gods face to face, a clear indication of the contrasting approaches to "confronting" divinity. Indeed, the Latin-derived term "confront" (*con-* "with" + *frons*, *front-* "face") literally fits the Egyptian but not the Hebrew religious system: "(Give) your faces toward me, gods of piercing gaze who are in the retinue of Osiris … your faces toward me, all gods of the Underworld."[1] Examples of such direct encounters between god and worshipper are numerous across the broad spectrum of Egyptian literature, in popular literature and the more narrowly defined religious and magical texts.

A royal perspective is provided in the coronation oracle of the New Kingdom pharaoh Tuthmose III (ca. 1500 BCE) during a statue procession of the god Amon at Karnak: "[He opened for] me the doors of heaven; he opened the portals of the horizon of Re. I flew to heaven as a divine hawk, beholding his form in heaven; I adored his majesty. … I saw the glorious forms of the Horizon-God upon his mysterious ways in heaven."[2] A sacerdotal counterpart is provided by the texts of priestly inductions from the same temple in the Third Intermediate Period (Pseusennes I to Kashta ca. 1055–735 BCE):

> He said at the sight of his (Amon's) holiness, when the crew of Re are elevated: "I am saved."
>
> My heart, my heart! What you wished has occurred, as I saw the secret image of the one who is in Thebes, and I viewed the brilliance.[3]

1 For this repeated invocation to gods, see the First Book of Breathing, P. BM EA 10191, col. I/4–6 in Herbin (2008) 50–51 and 53, note to col. I/4.

2 Breasted (1906) 55–61, quotation on p. 61, §141.

3 Ritner (2009a) 49.

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The contrast with biblical theology could hardly be greater. Standard temple processions become public oracular consultations (*pḥ-nṯr* "reaching god"), when a god is directly questioned and provides a response by movement, speech or selected, pre-written answers. Privatized – outside a public temple context – as early as the New Kingdom, the *pḥ-nṯr* in the form of lamp divination and other procedures continues without interruption into the Demotic and Greco-Egyptian magical papyri.[4]

Direct visualization of the solar creator – and unification with his divine company – was also offered in the *Book of the Dead* (BD) in spells such as nos. 133–134,[5] but scholars are divided over whether one may go beyond "fraternizing with the god"[6] to actual merger with the deity.

The negative position is most forcefully expressed by E. Hornung: "The Egyptians evidently never experience a longing for union with the deity."[7] This assessment has been accepted by R. Jasnow and K. Th. Zauzich, the editors of the Demotic "Book of Thoth," an often-obscure initiatory text of later Egyptian mysticism[8] preserved in multiple, but quite fragmentary papyrus copies:

> In as much as mysticism often implies a type of union with the divine, it should be emphasized that the disciple in the Book of Thoth does not claim to "become one with" Thoth. There does not seem to be a merging with that deity or with Osiris. At most, the disciple implies identity with one of those in the entourage of Thoth (which may also be understood as merely figurative).[9]

Given the highly fragmentary and often cryptic text, however, any accurate evaluation of what the Book of Thoth *might* have contained is impossible. The

4 Ritner (1993) 214–220; Ritner (1995) 2: § 18. 5: 3333–3379, esp. 3339–3348.

5 Ritner (1993) 63–64. The text of 133 includes: "Osiris NN is Re." Cf. the derived procedure in *PGM* XIII.152 and 460: "I precede you, lord, I who rise on the boat of the sun, the disk, thanks to you" in Betz (1992) 176 and 184; Preisendanz (1974) II: 94 and 110.

6 The phrase is used, for example, to describe the meeting of king Neferhotep I with Osiris at Abydos; see Simpson (2003) 342.

7 Hornung (1982) 207. However, Hornung's following statement is significant: "but their hopes for the next world are based on becoming 'like a god,' on assuming the role of one of the great gods and thus themselves affecting the course of the world"; Hornung (1982) 207.

8 On Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; also Chpt. 10, sect. 1.3 and n. 13; on the Orphic mystic rites of the initiates see Chpt. 7, sect. 1 and n. 5; on theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13, sect. 1.3 and n. 18; Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, and sect. 3. On Egyptian mystic union see Chpt. 3 and nn. 18, 30.

9 Jasnow and Zauzich (2005) 56.

basis for the editors' opinion can be traced to the statement "I will be like unto a statue, and I will be one with the assistants."[10] On the other hand, the Book of Thoth *does preserve* self-identification by the disciple with the sacred dogs and baboons, who are *divine* assistants in the solar bark: "May one place me among the rowers, the dogs …"[11] "I shall be a baboon among them."[12] These divine unifications conform directly to known features of Egyptian magico-religious ritual as recognized by J. Assmann and cited, somewhat paradoxically, beside the editors' rejection of the concept: "human beings … can transpose themselves into the icon, e.g., by becoming a baboon in the morning."[13]

If the important publication of the Book of Thoth reflects some continued adherence to the doubts of Hornung, explicit evidence that this position is incorrect has been signalled for decades. In both state and personal ritual, direct unification with the divine is central and unambiguous. Thus in the Book of the Heavenly Cow, a combination of mythology and instructions for performance preserved in royal funerary contexts beginning in the reign of Tutankhamon, the practitioner *becomes* the god of Magic (Heka) and the solar creator himself (Re): "A man should say that he may make his protection through magic (heka), I am this pure Magic (Heka) that is in the mouth and belly of Re. O gods, spirits, and the dead, keep away from me! I am Re, the radiant one!"

While this passage indicates unlimited transformation for the actor – described as a generic man – not a king, a further repetition reinforces the identity at liminal moments "when you pass by in the twilight": "I am his (Re's) *ba*-spirit, pure Magic."[14] Earlier theorists were insistent that such transformations were restricted to the afterlife, but to do so requires ignoring the mundane procedures of the rite, with statues to be made, goddesses to be drawn and words "to be recited after being purified on the new crescent day and on half-month day in accordance with this ancient procedure." Benefits for the afterlife are certain, whence the tomb placement, but while the reciter "shall stay alive in the necropolis," he shall also have respect greater than others "on earth."[15] Other "funerary" compositions, including the guide Amduat

10 Jasnow and Zauzich (2014) 122–123, statement 413.
11 Jasnow and Zauzich (2014) 166–167, statement 606.
12 Jasnow and Zauzich (2005) 372 and 384 (B06, 1/16) = Jasnow and Zauzich (2014) 65, statement 44.
13 Assmann (1995) 66; cited in Jasnow and Zauzich (2005) 56, n. 166.
14 Simpson (2003) 296 (transl. Wente).
15 *Ibid.* 297.

("What is in the Underworld"), are even less ambiguous that such transformative rituals are beneficial for a man in the necropolis and "on earth (*tp t3*)."[16] The declarations of unity and terrestrial benefit are as blatant as possible in the Egyptian language and irrefutable: "The one who draws these representations is the likeness of the great god himself. It is useful for him upon earth."[17] It is significant that these declarations are in the generalizing present tense, unlimited by parameters of explicit time or context – not just for an hour, day or season, not just in the moment of ritual action.

Turning to the most recognized funerary literature, the evolving series of *Pyramid Texts* (Old Kingdom), *Coffin Texts* (First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom) and *Book of the Dead* (New Kingdom onward), is permeated by first person identifications with gods.[18] Within the *Pyramid Texts*, the oldest religious literature preserved in the country, one encounters a technique that will be a regular feature in Egyptian ritual magic into the Roman era, even crossing languages from Egyptian to Greek. The speaker threatens the gods, a *normative* technique in Egyptian ritual, but he shifts his identity by merger with another deity: "It is not Pepy who says this against you, O gods; it is Heka (god of magic) who says this against you, O gods."[19] A Roman-era descendent of the technique appears in the Demotic gynaecological spell O. Strassburg D 1338, in which the speaker becomes both Isis and Amon: "O heaven, do not create wind; O sea do not create waves … Seek after what I have said today, after what I have said as magic with the voice of Isis, the great. … Come to me, O gods of the South, North, East and West, at the voice of Amon, the great god of Thebes."[20] A Coptic Christian curse threatens: "Not by my power, but by the power of the lord Sabaoth."[21] Similarly, a Coptic spell against animal bite twice declares: "For it is the mouth of the lord Sabaoth which has spoken this."[22] Clearly, elements of the *Pyramid Texts* have a long legacy.

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16 Wente (1982) 161–179.

17 *Ibid*. 163.

18 On magico-theurgic identifications see Chpt. 11, sect. 3 and n. 15.

19 Ritner (1993) 16 (*Pyramid Text* spell 539). For ritual threatening of gods, see *ibid*., pp. 5–6, 22 (with references, n. 92) and 240, n. 1106; and Smither (1941) 131–132. For the Demotic (and Greek) continuation, see Ritner (1995) 3341 and 3348–3350, and the Egyptian-inspired curse in *PGM* LXII.1–24: "If you do not … I will shake the foundation of earth." A Greek use of the Egyptian technique of blame shifting in spoken curses appears in *PGM* IV.2475–2485: "She, NN, said it, not I." See Betz (1992) 83 = Preisendanz (1973) I: 149–150.

20 Ritner (1995) 3343–3344. For the threat against wind and sea, see the Greek-language variant in *PGM* VII.319–334 in Betz (1992) 126.

21 Meyer and Smith (1994) 187.

22 Paper Ms. Rylands 104; see Kropp (1931) 68; Crum (1909) 53–54 (§ 4).

The *Pyramid Texts* (PT) also provide the earliest examples of the equation Osiris + personal name, "Osiris So-and-so," a unity initially restricted to the sphere of the divine king (and two queens), but over time expanded to all worshippers.[23] A frequent beginning for the spells is the invocation "O Osiris King So-and-so" (PT spells 25, 27, 28, 38, 47–49, 57–59, 61–71, etc.). Since the living king is the incarnate god Horus So-and-so, the funerary Osiris is a transition between the two divine unities: "O Horus who is in Osiris King So-and-so" (PT spells 26, 30, 80 and 449).[24] Beyond Osiris, the deceased king is equated with a wide range of deities, both male and female, as well as divine birds (PT 626, 668, 682) and stars (PT 463, 466, 571, 676). Equated deities include Horus (PT 294, 587), Sobek (PT 317), Shu (PT 360), the Eye of Re (PT 402, 405), Satis (PT 439), Bat (PT 506), each of the four sons of Horus (PT 506, 573), Dewen-anwy ("He whose Wings are Spread" PT 506), Anubis (PT 578), and Geb (PT 599). Succinctly, PT 33 declares: "Nut has caused you to be a god to your foe in your name of God." Similarly, PT 43 proclaims: "Raise yourself, they say, in your name of God, and may you become the Atum of every God."

In the succeeding *Coffin Texts* (CT) and *Book of the Dead* (BD), the most common expression of a divine union is the bare statement "I am god X" (*ỉnk* + Divine Name). In the 165 spells of the papyrus of Iuefankh (P. Turin 1791), the source of standardized *Book of the Dead* editions, it occurs by my count 134 times.[25] The number is necessarily subjective, since distinctions are not sharp between names and epithets of known deities (narrowly defined) and those of the blessed dead ("I am the Praised One" or similar). Nevertheless, the omnipresent usage is undeniable and diagnostic for the genre. As in the preceding funerary literature, the gods equated with the deceased in the *Book of the Dead* constitute a broad range, extending from major deities to lesser known figures: Osiris, Sobek, Horus, Re, Anubis, the Phoenix, Hotep (lord of fields), etc. Throughout the corpus, divine identifications are not limited to one deity per spell, but frequently appear in in combinations: "I am Osiris … I am Orion … I am Anubis … I am Horus … I am Osiris" (BD 69a).[26] Divine identifications can

23 For an expanded discussion of personal identifications with deities in funerary literature, abbreviated here, see Ritner (2017) 109–115. An unconvincing challenge to traditional interpretations of the *Pyramid Texts*, and Egyptian religion in general, is offered by Smith (2017). Critiques of some aspects of the volume will be presented below.

24 *Contra* Smith (2017), for the inherent divinity of the living king as Horus and the deceased ruler as Osiris with extended identifications (both permanent and transitory), see Griffiths (1982) 48–54, at 52–54.

25 Examples of *ỉnk* (without following noun) are gathered in Backes, Munro and Stöhr (2005) 20.

26 Allen (1974) 63 (BD Spell 69a §§S1–4).

also be distributive, with each human body part equated with a divine counterpart: "Your pate is Anubis; the back of your head is Horus. Your fingers are Thoth; your braided tress is Ptah-Sokar" (BD 151). This technique of magical lists ensures that "there is no limb in you devoid of a god." It represents divine union by assemblage and is a regular feature of later Egyptian magico-ritual texts.[27] In discussing the technique, J. G. Griffiths concludes: "If these divine physical properties have thus been assumed, it may confidently be inferred that it is meant to imply the divinization of a mortal man."[28]

As is now recognized, the *Book of the Dead* rites and texts were used by the living,[29] and the technique of divine identifications was standard in Egyptian magical texts.[30] The tradition continues without break into the indigenous magical texts composed in Demotic, Greek and Coptic during the Hellenistic and Roman eras: "I am (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ) Anubis, I am Osiris-Pre, I am Osot Soronouier, I am Osiris whom Seth destroyed" (*PGM* I.251–252).[31] Continuing the *Book of the Dead* practice of bowl divination (as in BD 133, in which "Osiris so-and-so is Re"), the Demotic London and Leiden magical papyrus (PDM XII) equates the practitioner with the supervising god: "I am (*ỉnk*) Horus-Amun who sits at this vessel divination here today."[32] The millennia-old Egyptian ritual phrase "I am god X" is translated into Greek as ἐγὼ εἰμι + divine name:

> I have consecrated you ... for I am PHOR PHORA PHOS PHOTIZAAS.
> (*PGM* IV.765 = Betz 1992, 53)

> Enter in, appear to me ... I am the one who is from heaven; my name is BALSAMES.
> (*PGM* IV.1015–1019 = Betz 1992, 58)

> Write with myrrh these things (on a linen phylactery worn during the rite): I am HOROS ALKIB...
> (*PGM* IV.1075–1076 = Betz 1992, 59)

> Appear to me, Lord Anubis, I command you, for I am IEO BELPHENO, who considers [this] matter.
> (*PGM* VII.331–333 = Betz 1992, 126)

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27 For such divinization by lists, see Ritner (2017) 111–112 with references.
28 Griffiths (1982) 54.
29 Barbash (2017) 75–84.
30 On magico-theurgic identifications see Chpt. 11, sect. 3 and n. 15.
31 Betz (1992) 9. The quotation is an Old Coptic invocation within a Greek-language text.
32 *Ibid.* 196. For the Demotic revelatory rites by bowls and other means, see Ritner (1995) 3346–3347.

I have selected examples from vessel divination to emphasize the parallelism, but such divine identifications are used for all magical practice in Egypt, regardless of period or language. Whether expressed as *ỉnk*, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ or ἐγὼ εἰμι, these ritualized divine unions are ubiquitous in the so-called Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM*); they are purely Egyptian in concept and composed by bilingual residents of Egypt.[33] Egyptian linguistic influence (from *ỉnk*, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ and nominal predicates without verbs) may also influence some Greek *PGM* statements of identity that employ only ἐγώ:

> I (am) the father of Isis. Ἴσιδος πατὴρ ἐγώ. (*PGM* IV.2291 = Betz 1992, 79)

> For you (are) I and I (am) you; your name (is) mine and mine (is) yours. For I am your image. σὺ γὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ σύ, τὸ σὸν ὄνομα ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ ἐμὸν σόν· ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι τὸ εἴδωλόν σου. (*PGM* VIII.36–38; Betz 1992, 146)[34]

Though now edited as a parenthetical remark with inserted comma, *PGM* XIII.460–461 is more likely the simple Egyptian statement:

> '… I am the one rising on the bark, the disk, through you.'
> '… ἐγώ, ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς βάρεως ἀνατέλλων, ὁ δίσκος, διά σε.'[35]

Within the Coptic spells, divine equations make the transition to Christian theology as well:[36]

> I am the Great One, son of the Great One; I am Anubis, who bears the glorious crown of Re and puts it upon King Osiris.[37]

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33 The many examples of "I am" in the *PGM* corpus are gathered in the unpublished galley proofs of Preisendanz (1941) III: 83, long circulating as xerox copies (Betz 1993, xliv), but now uploaded online in a faint copy by Leiden University: http://hum2.leidenuniv.nl/pdf/communicatie/PGMIII.pdf (last accessed September 15, 2018). Egyptian ⲁⲛⲟⲕ (with variant spellings) is noted on p. 246 and fully on p. 215. For the Egyptian basis and authors of the bilingual corpus, see Ritner (1995). For the use of "I am," see *ibid.* 3352 and 3362.

34 Cf. the parallel with the incomplete verb in *PGM* VIII.50: "I am you and you (are) I" = Betz (1992) 146: ἐγώ εἰ ⟨μι⟩ σὺ καὶ σὺ ἐγώ. Contra Morton Smith in Betz (1992) 146, n. 11, the term "image" does not indicate Greek philosophical influence but conforms to the "imagistic principle" fundamental in Egyptian theology and ritual; see Ritner (1993) 247–249.

35 Contrast the Morton Smith translation in Betz (1992) 184.

36 Note the earlier adaptation of Hebrew figures: "I am Adam" (*PGM* III.145; Betz 1992, 22); "I am Moses" (*PGM* V.105; Betz 1992, 103). For divine identifications in Coptic magic, see Kropp (1931) II: 145–147.

37 See Betz (1992) 40 (*PGM* IV.122–128); Meyer and Smith (1994) 25, both requiring minor corrections.

> I am the one who went up to heaven, crying out: "Eloi Ei Elemas." I myself am God.[38]
>
> I am Maria; I am Martha; I am the Mother of the Life of the entire world.[39]
>
> Lo, Jesus, I am in Maria! Lo, John, I am in Elisabeth![40]
>
> My mother is Maria. The breast of [my mother] is the breast from which our Lord Jesus Christ has drunk.[41]

Of all the varying expressions of divine unions in Egyptian religious texts, the most common is the simple juxtaposition of the name Osiris before a personal name: "the Osiris So-and-so," thus occupying the same position as a fronted title (cf. "the king/steward/scribe So-and-so").[42] The combination appears not only in funerary literature, but on tomb walls, stelae, dedicated objects, and in documentary texts. Many of these examples are prospective uses while the individual is still alive. The pattern with Osiris is first found in the *Pyramid Texts*, as noted above, and it continues until the end of traditional Egyptian religion. Innovation does occur in the Late Period and thereafter, when the name of the goddess Hathor is substituted for females (as in Papyrus Rhind 2). At the same time (as in Papyrus Rhind 1), the standard writing Osiris + personal name can now appear as Osiris + *n* + personal name, a construction that M. Smith has discussed in multiple publications, arguing that the meaning must be "the Osiris of So-and-so," and, less believably, that his reinterpretation must be applied uniformly to all writings from the *Pyramid Texts* onward, regardless of spelling.[43] The issue is ultimately of importance for the nature of the divine union intended

38 Meyer and Smith (1994) 221. The cry is by Jesus on the cross in Mark 15:34. For the use of "I am" + deity in Coptic magic, see Ritner in Meyer and Smith (1994) 185. This continuity in Roman and Christian-era magic is in spite of the transition from ancient legality and orthodoxy to illegality and unorthodoxy; see Ritner (1993) 217–220 and 235–241.

39 P. Berlin 8372; see Kropp (1931) II: 144–145.

40 Paper Ms. Rylands 104; see Kropp (1931) II: 68; Crum (1909) 553–54 (§4). The speaker is equated with Jesus and John the Baptist in the womb.

41 Paper Ms. Rylands 103; see Kropp (1931) II: 211–212; Crum (1909) 53.

42 For titles preceding names, cf. a standard example in Gardiner (1957) 146–147 (reading lesson).

43 See Smith (2006) 325–337, with earlier bibliography on 325–327. The rereading becomes a motivating concept for Smith (2017), see the section headings for pp. 155–161.

by the expression (and its denial by Smith), so a brief rejoinder is necessary.[44]

Noting the variability of the explicit spellings "Osiris NN" vs. "Osiris of NN" in the Rhind papyri alone, Smith questions "Are we really to imagine that the writer of a funerary text would switch back and forth between two entirely different conceptions of this relationship from one passage to the next?[45] Whatever a single writer might do within one manuscript, it is certain that variability exists across manuscripts, as Smith acknowledges but undervalues in listing the options for the male and female deceased. Rather than simply Osiris or Hathor NN, the male deceased can be Sokar Osiris NN, and the female Osiris Hathor NN, or Sokar Osiris Hathor NN.[46] One cannot simply insert genitives in each case, with the resulting nonsense "Sokar of the Osiris of NN," "Osiris of the Hathor of NN," or worse "Sokar of the Osiris of the Hathor of NN." In fact, the different feminine equations Osiris Hathor NN and Sokar Osiris Hathor NN, or simply Osiris NN or Hathor NN, are all used *for the same individual in the same manuscript* in Papyrus Harkness, columns I/1 and IV/11, so there is an affirmative answer to Smith's rhetorical question.[47]

The Demotic writings with "*n*" are a new development. Smith suggests that the written practice begins in the Twenty-first Dynasty on royal reburial dockets,[48] but strictly speaking that is not true. The most explicit of the reburial texts is for Ahmose I, in which King Pinedjem I "issued a dispatch to give Osiris-status to the Osiris, King Nebpehtyre (Ahmose I).[49] Here there is no "Osiris of NN"; an "Osiris" aspect (reburial) is given to the deceased king, but the possessor is "the Osiris, King NN" where both "Osiris" and "King" are fronted titles. Put simply, the "*n*" is a dative dependent upon the verb "to give" (*rdi.t*), not the visually similar genitive "*n*." It would be absurd to follow Smith in reanalyzing the passage as giving redundant "Osiris-status to Osiris(!)" of

44 I have refuted Smith's uniform rereading in a public lecture being prepared for publication: "*Becoming Osiris: A Response to "Osiris NN or Osiris of NN"* (American Research Center in Egypt convention, Houston 2015).

45 Smith (2006) 332.

46 *Ibid.* 325.

47 Smith (2005) 49, 73, 74, 84, 88 and 200. One might argue that Sokar Osiris is a united deity, but clearly each divine name is a parallel, prefixed title, as recognized by Cole (2013) 201–214, esp. 208–209 on the list of varying titles. Cole adopts Smith's reading with "*n*" but still explains these links as transfigurations (204), transformations (210) and Osiris/Hathor "forms" (202, 212), with the acquisition of divine attributes (212). For the significance of Sokar-Osiris for these issues, see below, at n. 84.

48 *Ibid.* 330–331 and 333.

49 Ritner (2007) 116; see also the reburials of Ramses III (p. 115) and Prince Siamon (p. 116).

King Ahmose.[50] The Ahmose reburial docket should be compared with a similar text for Ramses II, also in the reign of Pinedjem I: "The day of bringing the Osiris, King (Ramses II) to renew him and to bury him in the royal tomb of the Osiris, King (Seti I)."[51] In both cases here, the titles Osiris and King are in parallel and no genitive is expressed or reasonable.

Examples from private mortuary remains reinforce this parallelism with no genitive. The coffin of Djedhapy in Philadelphia is inscribed for "the Osiris, the justified, Djedhapy, the justified,"[52] where Osiris and Djedhapy are paired references to the justified corpse. In the Greenfield Papyrus of the British Museum, the hieroglyphic caption of the initial section invokes: "Osiris, lord of eternity, foremost of the west – May he give bread, beer, oxen, and fowl to his daughter, to the Osiris, great chief of the musical troupe of Amon … (plus six additional titles), to the Osiris, chief of noble ladies, Nestanebetisheru."[53] The repetition of Osiris, coupled with both the titles and name of the deceased, shows again clear parallelism, not "Osiris (titles) of the Osiris (title) of" the deceased. The designation of the deceased female as the "daughter" of Osiris reflects yet another alternative for creating a *direct* physical link between a deceased woman and the god.

In his first presentation of the Demotic variants to a wider Egyptological audience in 2006, Smith questioned the relationship between Osiris or Hathor and the person linked to the deity: "Clearly some sort of union is involved, but what sort of union?"[54] He rightly rejected, I believe, the supposedly Greek-influenced "mystical union (*unio mystica*)" advocated by S. Morenz and L. Kákosy that required rejection of the body and earthly personality in a complete merger with deity.[55] Mummification continued into the Coptic era, and the name and individuality of the deceased are always stressed, so there is no Egyptian theological hostility to earthly forms. Rejection of the Hellenocentric strictures, of course, need not deny a concept of "mystical union" based on *Egyptian* cultural norms. Instead, Smith prefers the term "liturgical union (*unio liturgica*) introduced by J. Assmann, entailing knowledge, ritual participation

50 The same objection of redundancy applies to Smith's treatment of Osiris statues as *Osiris images of the Osiris of NN*; see Smith (2006) 330, n. 28.

51 Smith (2006) 115.

52 Penn University Museum E3413, cover, lines 1–2. A colour photograph of the coffin serves as the Frontispiece to. Fleming *et al.* (1980). See Figure 3.2. I thank Jennifer Houser Wegner for the enhanced photograph of the coffin.

53 Budge (1912) 2–3 and plate 1. I thank Foy Scalf for drawing my attention to the reference.

54 Smith (2006) 334.

55 *Ibid.* 330 and 334.

and integration within the *collective* divine retinue, with only "an element of divine identification here."[56]

Smith has changed his position in his 2017 personal manifesto, significantly titled *Following Osiris*, by "unreading" all trace of the traditional notion of union between the deceased and Osiris:

"In my opinion, there is ample evidence to prove that the prefixing the name of Osiris to that of the deceased king does not constitute an expression of identity."[57]

"The locution *Wsỉr* NN, in which the name of the deceased is preceded by that of Osiris, does not indicate identity between them… It served initially to identify the dead as recipients of sustenance under the auspices of Osiris, although it soon came to be a more generic marker of the deceased's association with the god."[58]

At most, according to Smith's latest opinion, king and commoners alike are mere "followers" and "dependents" of Osiris,[59] except in limited ritual contexts which should be considered simply "functional" and not "theology," only "valid within the framework of the ritual but not outside it."[60] In other words, Egyptians used ritual phrases that they *did not inherently believe*, yet they *did believe* that saying the false phrases would "confer some benefit upon an individual or invest a person or thing with a specific power."[61] The rebuttal writes itself. The irrelevance of ritual for theology reflects the bias of a seventeenth-century Reformation tractate; it has no place in modern scholarship.

Despite Smith's nihilistic opinion, divine unions indicating a permanent state, and not a transitory ritual instant, certainly exist. Devoid of any ritual context, divine unions are captured visually by the Amduat papyrus of the woman Nany (P. MMA 30.3.32). The papyrus consists of an illustrated file of forty standing mummiform gods with their individual names or emblems above their heads. Repeatedly alternating (nineteen times) with these divine symbols is the name "The Osiris Nany as one who is justified ('true of voice')" (Figure 3.1).[62] In effect, the triumphant Nany is directly equated with the entire file of deities; they are all components of Osiris Nany.

56 *Ibid.* 3334–3335.
57 Smith (2017) 156.
58 *Ibid.* 165.
59 *Ibid.* 159.
60 *Ibid.* 162–163.
61 *Ibid.* 163.
62 Piankoff (1964) 114–19 and 170–172. The same interpretation is found in Foreman and Quirke (1996) 142.

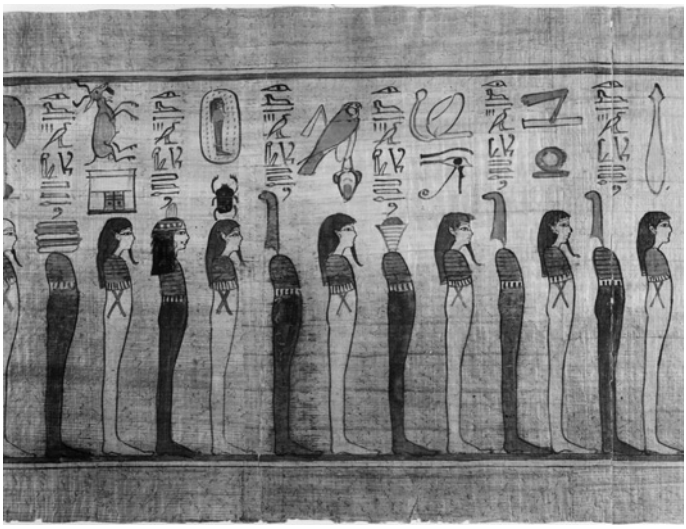

FIGURE 3.1 Papyrus of Nany
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART 30.3.32

Comparable to this depiction is the conclusion to *Book of the Dead* Spell 137A (§S3): "May Osiris N. live in his true nature (*qmȝ=f mȝʿ*), in his form (*ỉrw*) of a true god." The validity of this union is stressed in the instructions for performing the spell (§T9): "Since the gods and the blessed and the dead see him in the form (*ỉrw*) of the Foremost of the Westerners (= Osiris), he is powerful like this god."[63] It is critical to note that in both passages the specific term used for "form," *ỉrw*, designates an essential, not a transitory, form (which would be *ḫprw*).

Unrecognized by Smith, the unity of man and deity is not only attainable at death, but is intrinsic in life. Thus, in the tomb of Paheri at el-Kab the prince boasts: "I know the god who is in (*ỉmy*) mankind, since I perceive him."[64] To the tomb visitor he recommends: "May you traverse eternity in pleasantness of heart in the praises of the god who is in you (*ỉm=k*)."[65] One should recall that already in the *Pyramid Texts*, as discussed above, an indwelling god is attributed to the king: "O Horus who is in (*ỉmy*) Osiris King So-and-so" (PT spells 26, 30, 80 and 449).

63 Allen (1974) 114. See also the comment of Ritner (2017) 113.

64 Sethe (1907) 119/15.

65 *Ibid.* 117/11–12. For mankind as the equal and image of deity in nature and action, see Hornung (1982) 138.

Mankind is not irrevocably separate from god in Egyptian theology, since people – like gods – derive directly from the creator's fluids. In *Coffin Text* Spell 1130, the creator announces: "From my sweat I created the gods. Mankind (*rmṯ*) is from the tears (*rmy.t*) of my eye."[66] The revealed pun between *rmṯ* (man) and *rmy.t* (tear) is not a random phonetic accident in Egyptian theology. As words are divine creations, so these "puns" express an underlying cosmic bond between concepts. Knowledge and actions, like the rituals previously discussed, can effectuate this inherent divinity to produce tangible results. By the acquisition of magic (*heka*), the practitioner ingests/knows the creative force of the creator himself.[67] Explicit manipulation of the god Heka is already attested in *Pyramid Text* spell 539, noted above. As with other "magical" rites, the funerary texts and rituals exploit the force of *heka* to harness and exploit a divine link latent within mankind.

Divine unions are not just between human and deity, but between deities themselves. The ubiquitous pairing of Osiris + human personal name is immediately comparable to the normal pairing of Osiris + divine name, or to any of the synchronistic unions formed by pairing two divine names, such as Osiris + Apis, Sokar + Osiris (alternatively Osiris + Sokar), Re + Osiris, Amon + Re, etc., all of whom may be designated "the (singular) great god."[68] Predictably, Smith disputes the nature of some of these unions as well. The deity Osiris-Apis, whose name is Hellenized as "Serapis/Oserapis" with no trace of an inserted phonetic "*n*," is always treated as a unity, never the "Osiris of Apis." For the combined deity as a single god, in contrast to related plural gods, see the "Curse of Artimesia": "O master Oserapis and the gods who reside/rest with Oserapis, I [pray] to you."[69] Nor is Amon-Re, the unique king of the gods, the "Amon of Re." The union of Re and Osiris is explicitly described in the tomb of Nefertari, wife of Ramses II, in a paired label for an image of the conjoined god: "It is Re who resides/rests in (*ḥtp m*) Osiris" and "Osiris who resides/rests in (*ḥtp m*) Re." Similarly, *Book of the Dead* spell 127 (Dynasty 20) notes that the deceased both equals and "resides/rests in" (*ḥtp m*) the soul of Osiris: "I am the Soul of Osiris, in whom I come to rest."[70]

Smith is particularly concerned with denigrating the validity of the Solar-Osirian unity, a critical feature of Egyptian cosmology memorialized in imagery such as the depiction in the tomb of Nerfertari, just noted, in which

66 Buck (1935–1961) VII: 464–465; also II: 33 d.

67 See Ritner (1993) 23–24.

68 For older discussions of divine syncretism, see Griffiths (1982) 43–55.

69 *PGM* XL; Betz (1992) 280. For the Egyptian background of the text, see Ritner (1995) 3360.

70 Ritner (2017) 109–110; Allen (1974) 104, §S5. For discussion, see Hornung (1982) 93–96, the origin of Smith's argument.

the gods Re and Osiris share a single body and paired labels stress the union. Such textual labels are paralleled by variations of the statement that "you (plural) are a unified *ba*-spirit (*bꜣ dmḏ*)."[71] Smith objects to the concept of a "Solar-Osirian unity" on the basis of the impermanent nature of the union, though recurring every single night. The equation of a plural "you" with a singular, united spirit, Smith argues, must indicate that the gods remain distinct. In Smith's theology, unity must be a permanent state, no plural can be a singular, no duality or trinity can be One.[72] In Smith's words:

"Although *bꜣ dmḏ* is treated as a singular noun in some other texts, the fact that second person plural pronouns rather than singular ones are used to refer to it in this passage demonstrates clearly that here it is not seen as a single entity but rather as two fully independent ones linked together."[73]

"Normal syncretisms do not have a starting point, they just are. Thus, the nocturnal union of Re and Osiris is not a syncretism in the strict sense of the word."[74]

In sharp contrast, H. Bonnet identified impermanence and flexibility as *the hallmark* of all Egyptian syncretisms: "Von dem Gedanken der Einwohnung her wollen also die synkretistischen Formeln verstanden werden … Keine Einwohnung ist eine dauernde."[75] In response to Bonnet's interpretation, J. G. Griffiths properly noted that no strict sense of syncretism can be forced upon the Egyptian practice: "This is an attractive formulation although the variety of the modes of Egyptian syncretism, which are well defined by Hornung, is itself a warning against the application of one simple formula."[76] Hornung himself, however, is the source of Smith's "strict sense" of syncretism.[77] Unfortunately, Hornung is inconsistent in his terminology. Amon-Re is a "syncretistic form," a *union that can be modified or dissolved*, but the Solar-Osirian union is suspect for being transitory. Hornung even denies the existence of a parallel syncretistic form Re-Osiris, but then admits in a footnote that this *direct syncretism* (by his own definition) actually does appear in Dynasty Twenty-one: "Re-Osiris, the greatest god."[78] The "variety of modes" of the category of syn-

71 For examples of the labels, see Smith (2017) 302–305.

72 Though he describes Orion-Osiris as "that deity" in the singular, *ibid.* 312.

73 *Ibid.* 303.

74 *Ibid.* 305.

75 Bonnet (1939) 40–52, quotation on p. 45.

76 Griffiths (1982) 43. See also the example of fusion, not indwelling deities in *ibid.* 46–47.

77 Hornung (1982) 91–99.

78 *Ibid.* 91 (syncretistic formula Amon-Re), 93 (mutability), 95 at n. 112 (syncretism Re-Osiris supposedly avoided, but attested). See also n. 111, where Hornung has reversed his published use of the term "syncretism."

cretism as termed by Griffiths offers the needed corrective to Smith's and Hornung's limited definitions. Ironically, if Smith's interpretation of "Osiris of NN" is applied to *Book of the Dead* spell 133, the result is a declaration that "The Osiris of NN is Re," expressing a Solar-Osirian union not as a transient event but as an inherent state (Osiris is Re), a concept against which he has railed throughout his volume *Following Osiris*.[79]

For Hornung, the quibble is one of terminology. Though not "synchronism" by his category, the daily unity of Re and Osiris is not denied. For Smith, if the merger is not a permanent "synchronism" then the union cannot be a "unity": "it is not clear why this should be interpreted as the permanent one sometimes designated as the solar-Osirian unity." [80] Smith's disagreement is misplaced, for the source he criticizes does in fact term the union a contextualized "event" that takes place "at the deepest, middle point of the Underworld."[81] At that moment, Egyptians do designate that perpetually-repeated event as a unity by the phrase discussed above: "You are a unified *ba*-spirit." Here and elsewhere Smith insists upon a binary reductionism inappropriate for the evidence or for Egyptian speculation: if late examples can show Osiris *n* NN, then all historical examples of Osiris NN must be reread, if a union is impermanent, it cannot be called syncretism or a unity, if a subject is plural, it cannot be described as a singular. This approach is antithetical to the Egyptian preference for a "multiplicity of approaches" with complementary viewpoints, not a simplistic "either-or." As summarized by Griffiths, "the Egyptian polytheistic system implies the belief that strength lies in plurality and diversity."[82]

Smith's suspicion that plural deities cannot be subsumed as a singular is easily dismissed. On the coffin of Meresamun in Chicago's Oriental Institute, the deceased woman requests that the king "give an offering to Ra-Horachty-Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, Lord of the sanctuary of Sokar, Onnophrios ('The Perfect Being'), Lord of the Sacred Land, the Great God, Lord of heaven, so that He might give offerings to the Osiris, chantress of the interior of Amun, Meresamun." Here *two trinities* as well as Osiris with epithets are all resumed by the singular "he."[83]

79 The issue dominates Smith (2017) 299–349, §§5.7 through 5.16.

80 Smith (2017) 312.

81 Roberson (2012) 138: "The annotation to the present scene refers to *this event* as the "great mystery beneath Aker" (emphasis added).

82 Griffiths (1982) 55.

83 See Ritner (2009b) published online: http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/is/reading_coffin_meresamun.html.

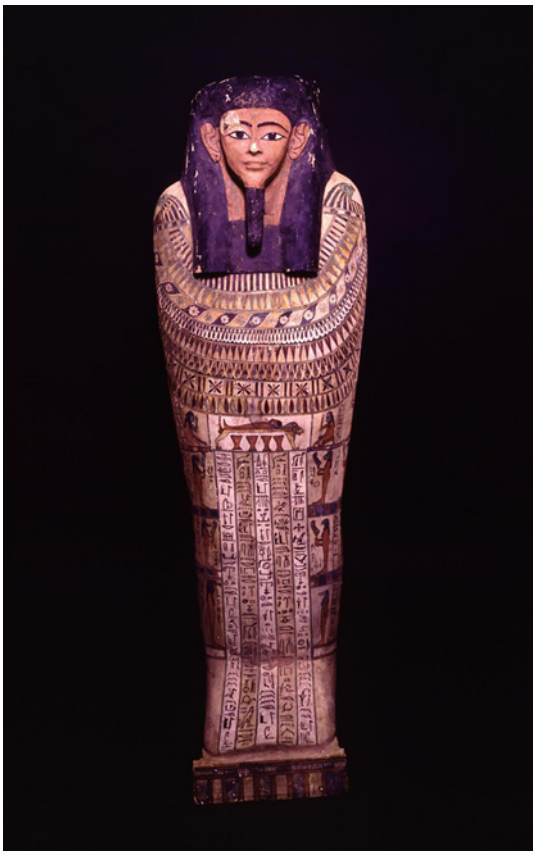

FIGURE 3.2
Coffin of Djed-Hapy
PENN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
E3413

Nor is this unique. The Philadelphia coffin of Djed-Hapi invokes a similar unified deity: "Atum, the great, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, Ra-Horachty, the great, Lord of heaven, Sokar as Osiris, the good god, Lord of the sanctuary, so that He might give offerings to the Osiris, Djed-Hapi (Figure 3.2)."[84] Clearly, the distinction here between "the one and the many" is one of perspective, allowing the worshipper to invoke either a single "forest" or multiple "trees." The same alternative is presented by the much-discussed epithet of the creator Amon-Re, "the one god who made himself into millions (*nṯr wʿ ỉr sw m ḥḥ*)."[85]

Evidence for the Sokar-Osiris unity in this Philadelphia text actually resolves the primary concern of Smith's proposed interpretation for Osiris + name. The challenge posed by Smith deserves to be quoted in full:

84 Lines 4–5.
85 For the epithet, see Ritner (1997) 37–40.

"Given the late date of the majority of our examples and since, from the New Kingdom onwards, the preposition *m* was sometimes written as *n*, one might ask whether the *n* in the combination Osiris + *n* + name of deceased could be the old *m* of equivalence, i.e., 'Osiris as so and so.' This seems very unlikely since the middle element is never written as *m*, and it would be incumbent upon anyone advocating this view to produce at least one example in which the *m* actually appears."[86]

The Philadelphia coffin of Djed-Hapi concludes its list of deities with the conjoined "Sokar-Osiris," written explicitly *Skr m Wsỉr* "Sokar as/being Osiris" (Figure 3.2).[87] The example cannot be a genitive construction and effectively nullifies Smith's objections. The inserted "*m*," which is always written "*n*" in Demotic (and the corresponding ⲛ̄ in Coptic) is not a *theological* development but a purely *grammatical* one. The morpheme "*n*" (from old "*m*") is required in Coptic to join two nouns in in an attributive construction that corresponds to an English adjective: ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ "a priestly man" (literally, "a man as/being a priest" Lev. 21:9); ⲡⲛⲟϭ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ "the great God" (literally, "the great one being God" Titus 2:23).[88] What Smith has identified is the Demotic-era antecedent of the Coptic practice, a linguistic innovation that that arises exactly at the time of Smith's examples of Osiris + *n* + personal name: "Osiris as/being so and so." If the grammatical pattern has evolved, the meaning remains unchanged; like the unified Sokar and Osiris, Osiris and the deceased are one.

Probably the last example in Egypt of united deities is found in Papyrus Baden 5 123, a magical compendium written in Coptic and Arabic that is dated to AD 600–799 on the basis of Arabic paleography (Figure 3.3). [89] The papyrus includes a drawing of Jesus Christ, first published by A. M. Kropp in 1930,[90] while the full papyrus was published by F. Bilabel in 1934.[91] The name Jesus

86 Smith (2006) 327–328.

87 Penn University Museum E3413, cover, line 5. One should compare this with the writing of "Ptah-Sokar-Osiris" on the Meresamun coffin with no mediating "*m*."

88 The mediated attributive construction has long been recognized in Coptic, cf. Stern (1880) 86 § 185, Crum (1939) 215b §1.c "adjectival adjunct"; and the more modern interpretation in Layton (2000) 81–84, §§ 99–102, and 164, §203 for the "mediating" ⲛ̄. The Egyptian antecedent "*m*" (preposition) is noted in Černý (1976) 102.

89 For P. Baden 5 123, located in Heidelberg; see https://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/text.php?tm=102087. A photograph of the papyrus is online at: https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/p_kopt_500/0001/scroll (accessed September 19, 2018). I thank F. Scalf for these digital references.

90 Kropp (1930) III: plate 6 and pp. 10, 214–215 (as "P. Reinhardt").

91 Bilabel and Grohmann (1934) V: plate 9; with discussion on pp. 333, 337, l. 103, 338 and 389.

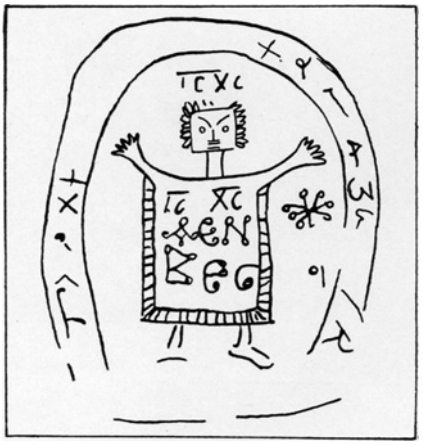

FIGURE 3.3
Vignette of "Jesus Christ in Bes" after Kropp (1930) plate 6

Christ is written above and upon the orant figure; in the latter position it is accompanied by the name of the Egyptian deity Bes. Redrawn and with color added, it was used as the cover image on the dust jacket of *Ancient Christian Magic* by M. Meyer and R. Smith in 1994. Kropp labels the figure "Christus-Bês," Meyer and Smith note that on the figure's robe "he is identified with the names 'Jesus Christ' and 'Bes' (p. iv)," and Bilabel simply ignores Bes in his descriptions of the image. In all these publications, no translation is provided for the word written in Greek magical "ring script" between Jesus Christ and Bes: ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲭ̅ⲥ̅ ϧⲉⲛ ⲃⲉⲥ. The Greek text with ring-script ϧ (= kh), slightly rotated to imitate a cross, vocalizes an underlying Coptic original, cf. Bohairic ϧⲉⲛ "in."[92] The result produces the label "Jesus Christ in Bes." The designation continues the traditional phraseology of gods "in" others, whether the latter are divine or human. Such images and statements capture a state of unity in which numinous beings (gods and men) merge powers and identities. Whether the merger is permanent, or fleeting is ultimately irrelevant; the union was expressed and undoubtedly experienced as "real" and not simply a concatenation of pointless recitations, as the examples generated through the millennia and across religious genres indicate. "Divine identifications are not mere ritual fictions, restricted to the context of funerary cult."[93] In the face of so much explicit evidence, and despite contrary opinions, the Egyptians "evidently" not only longed for a union with deity but ritualized its practice for the living and the dead. Even as the union of deities allowed each to retain his individual

92 Crum (1939) 683a.
93 Ritner (2017) 113.

characteristics, so the union of deceased with Osiris did not entail the loss of individual personality, name or identity. This is not the Hellenistic *unio mystica* proposed by S. Morenz and L. Kákosy, but in Egyptian terms it is a "mystical union" nonetheless.

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CHAPTER 4

Constantine: God-Man or Man of God?

Mark J. Edwards

1 Introduction

"God is in heaven and you are on earth" is an adage ascribed to Solomon (Ecclesiastes 5:2). The highest aspiration of human beings in the scriptures is to become the perfect image and likeness of God, or as Christians put it, to be perfectly in accordance with that image who is Christ. The plural of the term *theos* is eschewed throughout the New Testament, except in one quotation of a Psalm,[1] and it cannot even be proved that Christ himself, the Son of God, was worshipped under his Father's title, although the church gave him the biblical title *kurios*, or Lord.[2] The Romans, by contrast, accorded to the majority of their emperors after death the epithet *divus*, which, while it fell short of *deus* ("god"), entitled them to a pompous funeral and some form of cult.[3] Christians before Constantine were put to death for refusing to sacrifice to a living emperor; the ascendancy which the church acquired in his and subsequent reigns was therefore fatal to the cult of *divi*, as to every other manifestation of polytheism. Nevertheless, the majority of his own subjects were pagans, accustomed to the supine courtship of kings who demanded the honours due to a Hercules or a Jupiter even while they were on the throne.[4]

It will therefore be no surprise in the following paper to find his pagan sycophants loading him with divine honours; perhaps it is not surprising that his profession of Christianity, which became more public as he became more powerful, should have been incentive rather than a deterrent to such adulation. It may be an occasion for surprise, if not for satire, that Christians were by no means the least obsequious of his flatterers. On the one hand, he and his admirers were always conscious that the ascription of divinity to any human other than Christ was blasphemy; on the other, panegyric had its own conventions, no less than those of statuary or the minting of coins, and none these

1 John 10:34–35, quoting Psalm 82:6, where Elohim is often supposed to mean princes rather than gods.

2 See Hurtado (1988); Dunn (2010).

3 See further Gradel (2002).

4 DiPalma Digeser (2000).

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three phylacteries of power was any les necessary to him than to his pagan predecessors. He held the throne, after all, by dint of conquest, and some would say by usurpation. In the following comparison of his pagan and Christian panegyrists, the latter will prove, if anything, the more fulsome in their accolades, while at the same time they are dexterous enough to refrain from any extravagance that would breach a cardinal tenet of their own faith.

2 Young Constantine

In 307 Constantine married Fausta when her father Maximian assumed the purple for a second time, having abdicated two years earlier under duress.[5] The orator who celebrates this event reserves the chief honours for the divine mind and divine judgment of Maximian (*Panegyric* VII (VI). 7.1; 3.3), who returned under divine auspices (3.2) and was therefore able not only to present a consort of divine comeliness to his son-in-law but to elevate him to the summit of divine power (6.2; 6.1).[6] Only once, in allusion to his physical appearance, is this epithet bestowed on Constantine (6.5). He had no colleague, however, in 310 when a speech delivered in Trier praised the speed with which he had come to his father's side in Britain five years previously, as though borne in a divine chariot (*Panegyric* VII (VI). 7. 5); it might have added that this journey installed him as heir presumptive to Constantius, who died the following year. The encomiast goes on to say that his divinity is apparent to all observers (17.4), and then the dull routine of adulation is briefly enlivened by a rare scene in which he encounters a pagan deity:[7]

> *Vidisti, enim, credo, Constantine, Apollinem tuum comitante Victoria, coronas tibi laureas offerentem, que tricenum singulae omen ferunt annorum. Hic est enim humanarum numerus aetatum quae tibi utique debenture ultra Pyliam senectutem. Et immo quid dico "credo"? Vidisti, teque in illius species recognovisti, cui totius mundi regna deberi vatum carmina divina cecinerunt.* (*Panegyric* VI [VII]. 21.4–6)

5 On Constantine and Maximian see Warmington (1974) 371–384, at 373–377.

6 For all Latin panegyrics quoted here see Mynors (1964). For commentary on the panegyric of 310 see Lieu and Montserrat (1996) 63–96.

7 Piganiol (1932) 50 regards this is the one authentic vision of Constantine, while Alföldi (1948) rejects it as an invention. In publishing the story, Constantine may have been setting up his own iconography against the Jovian and Herculean nomenclature of the tetrarchs Diocletian and Galerius: see Warmington (1974) 378–379 with Digeser (2000).

> For Constantine, I believe that you saw your Apollo, with Victory at his side, tendering crowns of laurel, each of which carries an augury of thirty years. For this is the reckoning of the human age which is surely destined for you, beyond the longevity of Pylian Nestor. But why, after all, do I say "I believe"? You saw, and in his appearance recognised your own self, who are destined to be ruler of the whole world, as bards have proclaimed in their divine songs.

Tuus iam regnat Apollo, "now is the reign of your Apollo" declares the most famous of poetic vaticinations;[8] the Sibylline prophecies to which Virgil alludes will have been perfunctorily applied to any temporary master of the throne, but in this case the orator was prescient. Constantine reigned 31 years in all, habitually using the title Victor after becoming sole Emperor in 324. Since none of this could be known in 311, a vote of thanks to Constantine from the city of Autun is sparing of accolades, saluting his divine voice (*Panegyric* V (VIII).1.3) and his capacity to administer divine remedies (11.5) while attributing his success to the divine mind that governs all (10.2).

Only in 313, after he had driven his rival Maxentius into the Tiber, does an orator dare to assert that there is an affinity between this mind and that of its human instrument (*Panegyric* XII (IX). 2.5), whose victories are achieved not only *divinitus*, with divine aid (3.3), but by the exercise of *divinum numen* (4.1). The orator adopts the same reticence, naming no deity when he contrasts the superstition of the defeated tyrant with Constantine's reliance on divine precepts and divine counsel (4.4–5). When, in contrast to Xerxes and Augustus, Constantine throws himself into battle, he is protected by his own divine virtue (10.3), and in a campaign preceding the capture of Rome he was prompted by divine instinct[9] to create manacles for his prisoners from their own swords (11.4). While his was not the divine mind that addled the judgment of Maxentius (16.2), full homage is paid to Constantine's divine orations (20.1), and to the ardour which is nothing less than divinity in perpetual motion (22.1). The senate's dedications to him are the mortal simulacra of this divinity (25.4), and if Constantine is himself both a divine mind and a divine force (26.1), we need not wonder that his offspring is of the same rank (26.5).

8 Virg. *Ecl.* 4.10. On the Sibylline antecedents see Tarn (1932) 135–160.

9 As in the inscription on the arch erected in Constantine's honour by the Roman senate in the same year. Cf. Cic. *Div*. 1.12, 1.34, 1.64 and 1.66 with further Hall (1998) 648–670.

3 Constantine's Illumination

This apotheosis of the new autocrat of the west was the natural sequel to his victories – or would have been had he not undergone a recent change of heart that ought to have freed him from polytheism and its associated vanities. In 313 he met Licinius – now in name at least the eastern Augustus – at Milan and the two dispatched a letter to all provincial governors enjoining the restoration of Christian property and the repeal of all disabilities that had been laid upon the church. Within a few years of this edict (as it has come to be called)[10] his admirer Lactantius, formerly the tutor of his son Crispus in Bithynia, composed a fiery treatise *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*. Its thesis is that God has never failed to chastise the oppressors of his children or to vindicate their protectors. Of these the foremost is Constantine, who rescinded the persecution on his first assumption of power in 306 (thus imitating and surpassing the clemency of his father Constantius), and sealed his programme of conquest in 312, on the eve of the battle for Rome, by receiving a sign from heaven which he promptly had inscribed on his soldiers' shields. This is the oldest known report of Constantine's conversion to Christianity; yet the narrative could scarcely have been more elliptical as it comes to the night when Constantine, after getting the worst of a skirmish with Maxentius, encamped with his troops before the Milvian Bridge:

> *Commonitus est in quiete Constantinus ut caeleste sgnum dei notaret in scutis atque ita proelium committeret. Facit ut iussus est et transversa X littera, summo capite circumflexo, Christum in scutis notat.*
>
> In the hours of sleep Constantine was told to inscribe the celestial sign of God on his shields and thus join battle. He did as he was bidden, and, a line being drawn through the letter X, with the tip of the head bent into an arc, he inscribed Christ on his shields.

The account of the dream itself is as lapidary as the senate's *impulse divinitatis* on the arch which celebrates Constantine's entry into the capital.[11] *Deus* is the regular name in panegyrics for the unknown power which brings about some good and surprising turn of fortune. The labarum which was inscribed on the soldiers' shields is a device of uncertain origin and significance, which

10 See Lenski (2017) 27–56.

11 See further Hall (1998) 647–671.

any pagan could interpret to his own satisfaction.[12] Lactantius supplies the Christian gloss,[13] but if his spare prose represents the story given out by Constantine, it would seem that the latter did not yet wish the world to know the identity of his patron god, if he knew it himself. Pagan historians – those at least in the scurrilous transition that stems from Julian[14] – maintained that he had experienced no conversion, that his subsequent refusal to perform sacrifice on the Capitol was a symptom of his religious indolence, and that he turned to the church much later in his reign when it offered cheap atonement for his reckless execution of Crispus. Modern scholars ask why he was baptized only on his deathbed and profess to decipher a solar monotheism – the religion, perhaps of his father – in the rays that dart from his head on the currency before 325. This scepticism is hard to reconcile with his letters convening the Council of Arles in 314 and with his determination even after that gathering to ascertain whether Donatus or Caecilian was the lawful bishop of Carthage.[15] Even if he was not present at the council, even if his profession of the catholic faith in a letter to Aelafius, vicar of Africa, is a forgery, and even if every dating of his *Oration to the Saints* to 313, 314 or 315 is untenable,[16] it is clear that at all times after the capture of Rome the church saw Constantine as its patron and defender. Eusebius whose account of the vision (received on the Emperor's own sworn word) dispels all ambiguity, assigns it to an unspecified campaign which preceded the overthrow of Maxentius:[17]

> About the midday hours of the sun, as the day was already declining, he says that he saw with his own eyes, standing in the very heaven above the sun,[18] a trophy made of light in the shape of a cross, with a legend attached to it saying "By this conquer." At this spectacle astonishment seized both him and his army, which followed him as he pursued his course and was a witness to the spectacle. (Eus. *Vit. Const*. 1.28.2, pp. 182–184 Bleckmann)

12 See Alföldi (1932) 9–23; Hatt (1952) 427–436; Drake (1976) 73–74.

13 On Lact. *Inst. Div*. 7.14–26 as a key to the interpretation of this sign in Lactantius, see Nicolson (2000) 309–323, at 316–323.

14 See Edwards (2017) 75–90.

15 See Opt. *Ad. Don*. 1.26 and appendix 4.

16 See further Girardet (2013a) 371–381. On the *Oration* see below.

17 See Nicholson (2000) 313–314 on anticipations of this vision in earlier Christian literature.

18 A puzzling detail. What of Constantine had said in Latin *supra splendorem solis*, echoing Acts 26.13 (vision of Paul), and had been misconstrued by his Greek interpreter?

He spent the day in perplexity, which was relieved that night by a second vision, more perspicuous than the one related by Lactantius:

> That night he saw the Christ of God with the sign that had appeared in heaven. Christ exhorted him to make a copy of the sign that had appeared in heaven, and then join issue with the enemy under its protection. (Eus. *Vit. Const*. 1.29, p. 184 Bleckmann)

Summoning his artisans, the Emperor commands them to make the replica, encrusting it with gold and precious stones.

> A tall spear swathed in gold was crossed by a horn that formed the shape of a cross, and above this at the extreme tip was set a crown wreathed from gold and precious stones. Within this, presenting a symbol of the salvific invocation, two letters indicated the name of Christ though its first two characters, the letter Rho (P) being made to pass through the middle of a Chi (X). This was a device that the Emperor was also wont to wear on his helmet in later times. (Eus. *Vit. Const*. 1.31.1, pp. 184–186 Bleckmann)

Furthermore, the shaft of the spear was long enough to accommodate a banner, the upper half of which carried a portrait of the Emperor with his children (1.32.2). Constantine now goes on to receive instruction in the gospel in the gospel, having hitherto possessed nothing but the vague intimation of monotheism which he derived from his father (1.33). The jewelled ensign, carried into battle against Maxentius (1.37) and displayed in Rome to celebrate his defeat (1.40), is subsequently employed as a talisman when the troops of Constantine faint in battle against Licinius (2.6), who consequently warns his own men to direct no assault against it (2.16).

These particulars ought to satisfy us that Eusebius' narrative cannot be reconciled with that of Lactantius, which precedes it by twenty years. The Latin propagandist has nothing to say of a noonday spectacle, perhaps being less familiar with Paul's recollection at Acts 26.13 of the light from heaven which he beheld at midday "above the brightness of the sun." The one vision that he knows takes place at night, when dreams are true according to Horace; the celestial sign is not explicitly said to be a cross (although we might gather this from an earlier use of *signum* in the treatise), and the statement that Christ was subsequently impressed on the shields of the soldiers need not imply that Constantine heard or saw him in a dream. We may note that, although the Cross serves both as an ornament to Constantine and as a sym-

bol of God's victory over Satan in Eusebius' biography, it does not become a military cognizance until the last of eleven occurrences of the word *tropaion* at *Life of Constantine* (*Vita Constantini*) 4. 21. It is possible that Eusebius received a fuller account from Constantine than the latter had chosen to publish, when he was new to his faith and not yet monarch of the whole Roman world. It is also possible that his catechism in Christian doctrine had embellished the Emperor's memory of an event which he at first construed, like all his panegyrists, as a sign of favour from an unknown God. The clear assertion that the daylight vision was accompanied by legible words should suffice to explode the theory that Constantine had unwittingly seen a solar halo.[19] The theory is weakened even by the evidence adduced in its support, for when Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem had witnessed such a phenomenon in the reign of Constantine's son Constantius II,[20] he appealed to no supernatural concomitants but declared it to be a portent in its own right. Will the meteorological explanation also account for the appearance of this cross over every city that made common cause with Licinius in his war against Constantine (2.6)?

The parallel with Acts 26:13 is one illustration of the historian's fondness for typology. The prophylactic use of the Cross in warfare is another, for the most celebrated battle in the Old Testament was the one in which Moses repeatedly lifted his hands in the form of a cross to sustain the vigour of Israel against the Amalekites. The sun too is a recurrent image, the prototype of Constantine's spontaneous liberality to the poor (1.43), a symbol of the jubilation that follows the death of a tyrant (2.19), and the light which sinks below the horizon in Britain where Constantine commenced his labours (2.28). Its steadfast course bears witness to the power of God as Creator (2.58), and its brilliance, like the works of Christ, is invisible only to those who are wilfully blind (3.26). These include Christians who resist his edicts (4.41), whereas those who have named the first day of the week after the solar orb do honour to the saviour (4.18). The Church of the Apostles was designed to reflect its effulgence (4.58), as befits the burial-place of the greatest mortal upon whom it had ever shone (4.66). To any Christian exegete in this period, both the strong man who runs his race in the firmament and the light that ascends with healing in its wings at Malachi 4.2 were manifest emblems of the Saviour, and it had long been a custom to hail this sun of righteousness by facing east at dawn. Patently theological as

19 See Weiss (2003) 237–259. Flower (2012) 287–305. See also discussion on *melammu* in Chpt. 1, sect. 5.1 and n. 42; on royal divine aura see discussion in Chpt. 2, sect. 4; on supernatural aura see Chpt. 6, sect. 1 and n. 28.

20 Drijvers (2004) 51–53.

it is, his solar imagery awakens none of the doubts that have been raised for some historians by the mints of Constantine.

4 Preaching to the Converted[21]

That Constantine too could adopt the sun as a theological metaphor is evident from the exordium to his *Oration to the Saints*. Whatever the occasion (if indeed there was only one), he appears to have been familiar with the convention of introducing a paschal homily with an invocation of light.[22] In this case it may also carry a reminiscence of his own conversion:

> The splendour that outshines day and the sun, the prelude to the resurrection, the new composition of bodies which have travailed in times past, the sanction of the promise and the road that leads to eternal life, the day of the passion[23] is here, O most beloved leaders, and all you other dear men. Blessed too are the great multitudes of those who worship the God of our worship through the inner senses of each and intonation of unceasing hymns as is prescribed in the sacred utterances. (Eus. *Orat*. 1.1, p. 126 Girardet)

The authorship of the speech is seldom doubted today, and while its date and venue are still in dispute, it is agreed to show that Constantine had attained a mature understanding of his faith between 312 and the Nicene Council of 325 which affirmed the divinity of Christ and his coeternity with the Father. The extensive commentary on the Fourth *Eclogue* of Virgil (quoted at times, it seems, from memory) suggests that it will have been not only composed but delivered in Latin. Some parallels with Christian texts in Greek call for explanation, but the argument that the Sibylline acrostic would be intelligible only to a Greek audience is easily met by noting that Lactantius quotes a few lines from it while Augustine has a full version in Latin which almost preserves the cipher.[24] Constantine, who had not been raised as a Christian, gives

21 Text by Girardet (2013).

22 See Edwards (2007) 149–169, at 150–151. See this article and Girardet (2013) above for a survey of theories regarding place and occasion of delivery.

23 This ought to mean Good Friday, as Sunday, the day of resurrection, was always celebrated by the Roman church on a Sunday. We need not infer that this date was already observed in the Roman calendar during the reign of Constantine; if it was not, that would make it all the easier for him to assemble an audience for his own sermon.

24 Lact. *Inst. Div*. 7.16 and 7.19; Aug. *De Civ. Dei* 18.23.

tacit thanks for his schooling in adult life by his frequent echoes of Lactantius, among which the following passage deserves more notice than it has yet received from scholars:

> And Plato himself, who excelled all others in gentleness and first accustomed human intellects to rise from the sensible to the intelligible and the things that are always thus, the one who taught us to look up to things above, did well when he postulated the god above being, then made a second subordinate to this one,[25] dividing the two essences numerically,[26] while both shared one perfection and the essence of the second god[27] received its concrete existence from the first. For the maker and governor of the universe[28] is clearly sublime, while the other after him, in submission to his commandments, refers to him the cause of the constitution of all things. According to the exact account then, there would be one God who exercises care over all things and takes thought for them, having set all things in order by his Word. And the Word is himself God[29] and the child of God,[30] for how could anyone escape the greatest error, for how could anyone escape the greatest error if he gave any other name than the appellation "child"? For the father of all would rightly also be called the father of his own Word.[31] (Eus. *Orat*. 9.3–4, p. 152 Girardet)

While the ostensible source is Plato, the appellation "second god" is in fact a coinage of the Roman era, which Lactantius had transferred from the Latin

25 Cf. Pl. *Let*. 2; and Numenius of Apamea *Fr*. 11; Places.

26 Cf. Just. *Dial. c. Tryph*. 129.5.

27 The locution "second god" occurs (as an accommodation to pagan modes of speech) at (e.g.) Orig. *Cels*. 6.61 and Eus. *D.E*. 5.30.3. It was not a shibboleth of Arianism (the belief that the Second Person was "out of nothing" and hence not true god), since it was never used by Arius and did not in itself connote inferiority. Cyril of Alexandria, in fact, complains that the pagans who employ it fail to perceive that it implies equality: Cyr. Alex. *Ad. Jul*. at *PG* 76.316a.

28 Pl. *Ti*. 28c, cited by Orig. *Cels*. 7.42 and by many other apologists.

29 To call Christ *theos* ("god") was a rule for all sects in this period (cf. Arius, Letter to Eusebius at Theodoret *Historia Ecclesiastica HE* 1.5), though some would argued that, because he is styled *theos* ("god") and not *ho theos* ("God") at John 1:1, he possesses his divinity not by nature but by the will of God the Father.

30 Cf. Acts 4:27 etc., where the translation "servant" is also possible, with reference to Isa 42:1. If the Latin was *puer*, as in the Vulgate rendering of Acts 4:27, it anticipates the Christological exegesis of *Eclogue* 4 in chapters 19–21 of the *Oration*.

31 Cf. Pl. *Ti*. 28c and *Smp*. 177d. An Arian could have admitted that the First Person was the "father" of the Second in the sense that is here accorded to that term.

Asclepius to the second person of the Trinity.[32] Constantine does not say in such plain terms as Lactantius that the Son is a second god, but a true homology with Plato, as he is represented here, would entail his subordination to the Father. This tenet would have given little offence before the Council of Nicaea, and might have been thought consistent with its creed by some of the signatories, Eusebius first among them. For our present concern the question is not whether Constantine is orthodox, but whether he invites us to assimilate these two divine persons to himself and Crispus, the father commanding and the son executing his will. We shall see that this comparison was drawn by a Latin orator as late as 321, and the *Oration to the Saints* (whose title could almost denote an oration to the senate)[33] is by no means empty of political import. The criticism of Plato is preceded by an argument for the unity of the divine which has an obvious application to terrestrial affairs:

> What then does the argument show? That there is one overseer for all existent things, and that everything is subjected to his sole rulership, both things in heaven and those on earth,[34] both natural objects and organic bodies. For if there were not one but many authorities over these innumer-able things, there would be share-outs and divisions of elements and [things told in] ancient myths … And who would know the Maker of the whole realm of being? Who would be first or last in prayers and litanies? To whom could I pay especial worship without impiety to others? Or perhaps if I had need of something for my livelihood, I would offer thanks to the one who aided me, but blame the one who withstood? From whom would I have prayed to know the cause of the present calamity and thought fit to obtain relief?[35] (Eus. *Orat.* 3.2–3, pp. 132–134 Giradet)

At the end of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle had borrowed the words of Homer "let there be one chief and one king" to underwrite his demonstration that there can be no more than one Prime Mover. The converse argument may have commended itself not only to Constantine but to his beneficiaries Athanasius and Lactantius, both of whom urge in their own works that two independent gods could not coexist without constant strife. For all that, a speech by a Christian

32 Lact. *Inst. Div.* 4.6.

33 Woods (2002) 498.

34 Cf. Eph 1:10, Phil 2:10 and the opening clauses of the Nicene Creed.

35 For similar arguments in the age of Constantine, see Athan. *Con. Mund.* 36–38; Lact. *Inst. Div.* 1.3.18–19; Eus. *Constant.* 6.

to Christians could not affirm the identity of the speaker with any god, and least of all with any person of the one Godhead. All rumours of divinity are forgotten at the end, where he is content to be the servant of God so long as he can be his plenipotentiary on earth:

> But when they praise my service, which commenced with the inspiration of God, do they not confirm that God is the cause of my feats? Absolutely. For it is God's prerogative to decree the best things, and that of human beings to obey God. (Eus. *Orat.* 26.1, p. 234 Girardet)

While this is almost the end of the speech, it is not the last reference to the victories of Constantine. The saints are his witnesses to an unbroken career of conquest, the providential causes of which they cannot doubt after hearing his invectives against the persecutors Decius, Aurelian and Diocletian. Lactantius had already hinted, in his recital of the same events, that in lending himself as an instrument to divine justice Constantine had become the executor of that justice: the audience of the *Oration to the Saints* was left in no doubt that the obedience which had rendered him invincible had also rendered the duty of submission absolute.

5 A Different Vision

The longest account of a vision which accompanied Constantine's feat of arms before Rome is not the work of an avowed Christian, and makes no reference to his conversion. The panegyrist Nazarius, writing in 321, elaborates the terse statement of Eusebius that the army also witnessed the revelation. Hence, although the spectacle that he describes cannot be reduced to a solar halo, it would be wilfully incredulous to assume that all the new details spring from his own imagination:

> *Et quamvis caelestia sub oculos hominum venire non soleant, quod crassam et caligantme aciem simplex illa et inconcreta substantia naturae tenuis eludat, ibi tamen auxiliatores tui adspici et audiri patients, ubi meritum tuum testificati sunt, mortalis visus contagium refugiunt. Sed quaenam illa fuiise dicitur species, qui vigor corporum, quae amplitudo membrorum, quae alacritas voluntatum! Flagrabant verendum nescio quid umbones corusci et caelestium armorum lux terribilis ardebat. Haec ipsorum sermocinatio, hoc inter audientes serebant: "Constantinum petimus, Constantino imus auxilio." Habent profecto etiam divina iactantiam et caelestia quoque*

> *tangit ambition: illi caelo lapsi, illi divinitus missi gloriabantur, quod tibi militabant. Ducebat hos, credo, Constantius pater, qui terrarum triumphis altiori tibi cesserat, divinas expeditiones iam divus agitabat. Magnus hic quoque pietatis tuae fructus; quamvis particeps caeli, ampliorem se fieri tua gratia sensit, et cuius munera in alios influere non possent, in eum ipsum tua munera redudarunt*. (*Panegyric* IV (X).14.2–7)
>
> And although celestial things are not wont to appear to human eyes, because that simple and incomposite substance, so rare in its nature, eludes our dull and occlusive gaze, nevertheless those allies of yours permitted themselves to be espied and heard there where they testified to your worth, though they fled the contagion of mortal vision. But what an apparition that is said to have been, such bodily vigour, such massive limbs, such swiftness of intent! Something indescribably awesome darted from their shield-bosses, and terrible was the light that blazed from their celestial arms; for in such guise they came, that it might be believed that they came for your sake. This was their very utterance, these were the words that they sowed among those who gave ear: "It is Constantine that we seek, we come as allies to Constantine." Yes indeed, even divinities can be boastful, and ambition touches even things celestial; those who had descended from heaven, those who were sent by divine command, took pride in the fact that they were fighting for you. Their leader, I believe, was your father Constantius, who, having ceded triumphs on earth to you as his superior, was now leading divine campaigns in his divine character. This too was the great fruit of your piety: although he had a share in heaven, he was conscious of becoming greater by your bounty, and your gifts flowed back to that one who already had the power of diffusing his gifts to others.

The coruscation of the aerial shields anticipates the imposition of the cross on the shields of Constantine's troops, which is not recorded in this pagan variant. It is no doubt on the same principle that Constantius, as Nixon and Rodgers observe "replaces Christ."[36] If that is so, what status should we accord to the one who is said to be his superior, and to bestow on him the gifts that he communicates to others? Nazarius has described this episode not for the instruction of future historians, but in order to draw the comparison for which he has prepared his audience in an earlier paragraph extolling the divine tutelage of his hero:

36 Nixon and Rodgers (2015) 359.

> *Spectat enim nos ex alto rerum arbiter deus, et, quamvis humane mentes profundos gerant cogitationum recessus, insinuat sese totam scrutatura divinitas; nec fieri potest ut, cum spiritum quem ducimus, cum tot commoda quibus alimur divinum nobis numen impartiat, terrarum se curis abdicaverit, nec inter eorum vitas diiudicet quorum utilitates gubernat. Illa igitur vis, illa maiestas fandi et nefandi discriminatrix, quae omnia meritorum momenta perpendit librat examinat, illa pietatem tuam texit, illa nefariam illius tyranni fregit amentiam, illa invictum exercitum tuum tot victoriarum conscientia plenis pectoribus ardentem tantis insuper viribus iuvit quantas praestare aut deus potuit aut amor tuus debuit*. (*Panegyric* IV (X). 3.7.3–4)
>
> For it is the god who judges the world who watches us from on high, and though human minds may stow their thoughts in deep hiding-places, divinity none the less steals in without hindrance to inspect them. Nor is it possible that, when the divine power imparts to us the breath that we draw and so many means of nourishment, it should withdraw itself from earthly concerns and fail to discriminate between the lives of those whose sustenance it governs. Therefore it is this force, this sovereign arbiter of the speakable and the unspeakable which balances, weighs and examines all our merits to a nicety – this it is that has shielded your piety, that has smashed the unspeakable folly of that usurper; this it is that, as the consciousness of so many victories kindles the swelling hearts of your undefeated troops, has succoured them with all the additional forces that can be either furnished by a god or owed by your love.

Although the participle *ardentem* here is metaphorical, it has not lost the force of the literal sense which it bore in our first quotation. The final clause implies that, as the supernal *vis* is imparted to the soldiers, there is no clear line to be drawn between the acts of a god (or even "God") and those of his vicegerent. As in the first passage, so in this, the darkness that conceals the higher realm from mortal vision is dispelled by the intervention from above which secures the triumph of Constantine.

Before this effusion Nazarius has already declared it the duty of every lawful ruler to meditate on divine matters (2.6) and has coupled his facility in speech with the divine virtue that enabled him to rescue the city of Rome from her prostration under Maxentius (3.3). Since he is undoubtedly the usurper to whom our last quotation alludes – overthrown, as the arch of Constantine proclaims, by the intervention of some divinity – we have reason to suppose that the epiphany in chapter 22 is indeed an embellishment of the victor's famous

dream on the eve of battle. We are not permitted to doubt that Constantine was divinely aided in his conquest (12.1), for how could divinity fail to second his enterprise (13.5) when his own divine features had been marred by the tyrant's assault on his statues in the capital (12.1)? Evidently this flatterer knows nothing of the story told to avert the wrath of a later Christian emperor by John Chrysostom, according to whom the first reaction of Constantine when informed of the defacement of one of his images was to stroke his face and ask with a smile why he could find no scar. The living Constantine could not be expected to be so humble or so forgiving, least of all by a panegyrist who gives no sign of being a Christian. After contrasting the divine judgment in his favour (15.1, 15.3) with a dubious tale of two divine youths who vanished when they had guided the ancient Romans to a victory (15.4), Nazarius attributes a "divine instinct" to the Emperor himself on the occasion when he handed the disposal of Frankish prisoners to his son (17.1).[37]

Such is my honorand's strength and resource – says Nazarius, entreating the pardon of Virtue (19.4) – that he would have embarked on the liberation of Italy even without divine assistance (19.3). In fact, when the "force of divinity" expelled the pretender from Rome, the very swiftness of the event revealed that Constantine owed even more to fortune than to his virtue (27.5–6). Yet Constantine and his deity coalesce once more when we come at last to the battle, the account of which repeats a number of words from the passage in which the speaker recalled the descent of the angels:

> *Invadis primus aciem,*[38] *solus erumpis. Obumbrant euntem telorum inriti iactus, sonat ictibus umbo securus. His quos trabalis hasta deiecit, insultans equus proterit. Fulget nobilis galea et corusca luce gemmarum divinum verticem monstrat. Auro clipeus, auro arma conlucent. O quantam vim possides, Virtus, quae in hoc habitu plus terroris praeferas quam decoris!*[39] *Secuti hunc ardorem fortissimi milites, et dignos se ductu eius imperioque testati sic viritim laboraverunt, quasi summa res singulorum manu teneretur.* (*Panegyric* IV [X]. 29.4–6)
>
> You are the first to rush into the line of battle, the first to break out. As you go, you are overshadowed by the futile casting of darts, your shield-boss is unharmed as it rings to the blows. Those whom your beamlike

37 On the feats of Crispus as Caesar or crown prince see 36.3–4.

38 Cf. 26.1: per infestas acies interritus vadis.

39 Cf. 26.2: mortis decus perdunt quos ignoratus adfligis.

> spear has overthrown are trampled by your rampant steed. Your glorious helmet shines and makes known your divine head with the brilliant light of its gems. With gold your shield, with gold your arms shine forth in unison. O what force belongs to you, Virtue, as in this guise you display more of terror than of seemliness! Matchless in courage, the soldiers followed their ardent leader, and testifying their worthiness of his captaincy and command they strove so manfully that it was as though the whole outcome rested in the hands of each one.

Nazarius gives an alternative meaning to *acies* (now "battle-line" rather than "vision") and *iactus*, while it contains the root of *iactantia*, signifies "blow." And yet there is some analogy between God's piercing the crassness of our vision and Constantine's invasion of the opposing ranks, while if *iactantia* is a weakness in deities, so much the more are *iactus* and *ictus* doomed to impotence in their enemies. It is Constantine whose helmet now gives forth a brilliant light, and the troops who testify to his valour feel within their own hearts the flame that glowed from the arms of his god-sent allies. His shield-boss is as solid as any in heaven, and we have no reason to attenuate the sense of *divinum*, when that adjective has already been applied to his Roman statues. *Virtus*, in proximity to *viritim*, now connotes manliness rather than virtue, and the tenor of the whole passage encourages us to read this vocative as an apostrophe to Constantine himself. (*Panegyric* 3.29.5–6). At 32.1 the latter is openly credited with "divine glory," while at 34.2 the praise that is due to his temperance is truly divine, in contrast to the mere *iactantia* or boasting that of this virtue which we encounter in lives of philosophers. All circumlocution is put aside when at 35.3 the populace of Rome is said to preserve itself from both luxury and lassitude by obeying the admonitions of its divine prince. The city here has its own *vis*, but at 26.3 it is Constantine alone who prevails by *vis* and *maiestas*.

6 Eusebius *In Praise of Constantine*[40]

Nazarius, we may assume was not a Christian, or at least he did not choose to advertise his Christianity when engaging in a practice that was so heavily circumscribed by pagan conventions. The last allocution known to have been delivered in Constantine's presence, however, is not the work of a pagan or a dissembler but of Constantine's hagiographer Eusebius, who seldom composed any work which was entirely free of apologetic motives. This *Tricennial*

40 *PG* 20. 1316–1340 Migne.

Oration is perhaps the penultimate of his surviving works; in the last, his *Life of Constantine* (*Vita Constantini*), he frequently portrays Constantine as a minister of divine will,[41] impulse, counsel,[42] power,[43] favour[44] and inspiration,[45] and goes so far as to credit him with divine labours and divine qualities which have been divinely honoured[46] At the same time, the *Life* records his rebuke to a toady who promised him a share in the future empire of the Son, as though any man could be more than a servant of the Deity (4.48).[47] As we shall see, however, Eusebius himself comes close to earning this reproach in his panegyric, where the adjective "divine" is used with a licence to which he lays no claim elsewhere.

The proem is a summons to participation in divine mysteries. At the same time Eusebius declares that, while human can be no rival to the divine,[48] his intention is to honour not only the Father and his divine Companion, but also the Emperor who virtues are loved by God and whose actions evince his love for God. Crediting him with a knowledge of things both human and divine, Eusebius proceeds to the occasion of his speech, which is the thirtieth anniversary of Constantine's accession. His reign is thus assumed to have commenced on the day when his father's troops acclaimed him as the Augustus of the west, although the designated successor of Constantius was Severus. We who attend this festival, says Eusebius, are his children (1.1), and lest we should miss the analogy implied by this conceit[49] he adds at once that its president is the almighty Sovereign of the universe, whose throne is the arch of heaven and whose hosts are the innumerable angels (1.2). In his honour all the stars give tongue, and for him the sun and moon pursue their eternal cycles; the chief incentive to praise, however, is Constantine's veneration of him:

> Conscious as I am that [the Father] is hymned by our great king Christ, and by our Emperor, glorious in victory, I think that I do right, knowing that for us he is the sole cause of empire.

41 Eus. *Vit. Const.* 1.27, 3.20.

42 *Ibid.* 3.12 for both terms.

43 *Ibid.* 1.28, 2.46, 4.9.

44 *Ibid.* 1.10 and 3.26.

45 *Ibid.* 3.3.

46 *Ibid.* 1.9 and 4.48.

47 As the author of at least one such performance, Eusebius may not have told this story only to illustrate his hero's character, as Drake suggests (1988) 20–38, at 26.

48 This I take to be the meaning of 1317b, where all the Emperor's qualities are said to be noble but inferior to the divine. Drake (1988) takes this to mean "inferior to *his* divine qualities."

49 Cf. John 1:13, Acts 17:28 etc.

The last phrase might signify "sole cause of the kingdom"; no doubt the "he" of the last clause is the Father, but grammar permits it to be Constantine. In his devotions the latter is joined not only by the four Caesars but by the governors of all provinces and by multitudes from every tribe and nation (1.3). This is a hint, of course, that those who cling to polytheism will be obliged to yield to *force majeure*. Only now do we hear that he is also extolled – but again who is the "he"? – by all living creatures, plants and animals alike (1.4). Now follows a longer encomium on the obedience of the sun and other luminaries (1.5), the peroration to which is an appeal to the most exalted of the Father's invisible votaries, his pre-existent Word and Son who shares his glory as ruler of all things visible and invisible, at the same time making perpetual intercession for humanity. From him the present Emperor has received the governance of mundane affairs in imitation of God himself (1.6).

The Word, as his Father's co-regent from age to age, regulates both the natural and the human world in accordance with his Father's will, communicating to those who follow him the seeds of love and wisdom (2.3–4). Just as he opens his gates to all who fix their gaze on heaven, so Constantine in imitation of him invites all pious worshippers to his royal precincts, which are free of the stench and gore that polluted the ancient sacrifices (2.5). Knowing that God desires no oblation but a holy life and unwavering service, he offers him a yearly hecatomb not of dumb victims but of the souls who are in his keeping (2.6). We may recall here that in the *Life* which he published after the Emperor's death in the following year, Eusebius records that he professed a desire to be the *episkopos*, overseer or shepherd, of those outside.[50] In the course of the years he has also adopted his three sons, one by one, to be his coadjutors, and has now added others from his kin to the number. To show none the less that the royal supremacy remains unchallenged, Eusebius now avails himself of a simile that he would not venture to reproduce in the *Life*:

> Like the light of the sun he illumines those whose dwell in the remotest lands with the dazzling radiance of his Caesars, as these beams of his are sent forth and far abroad. (Eus. *Tric. Orat*. 3.4; p. 1330a Migne)

The monarchy of Constantine is an ectype of divine monarchy; as the Word imparts the knowledge of God to the souls of all rational creature, so the true king embodies and disseminates this knowledge, and for this reason alone he can no more tolerate a swarm of idols around the throne than God himself.

50 See Eus. *Vit. Const*. 4.24, with Rapp (1998) 685–695.

Eusebius is not content to suggest, but roundly declares that if there is one who rules in heaven, the rule of one must also be the best polity for an earthly commonwealth:

> The best law for ruling a kingdom is that which determines that one shall reign over all. Indeed, monarchy excels every people's constitution and mode of governance. For the rule of many of many, equal in status, which is set in opposition to it is rather anarchy and faction. Hence there is one God, not two, not there, nor yet many; for, properly speaking, polytheism is atheism. (Eus. *Tric. Orat*. 3.6; pp. 1330b–1332a Migne)

The text which has come down under the title *Triacontaetericus* (*Tricennial Oration*) is sometimes thought to be a contamination of two speeches.[51] If that is so, Eusebius was guilty of two effusions in which he all but forgot the infinite gulf that separates the Creator from his creatures. Even in combination the two fall well short of the *Life* in length, yet the incidence of terms connoting divinity is much higher. There is no doubt that the divine power which is extolled eleven times[52] is that of God (often exercised through his Son or Word); at the same time, we hear of no other instrument of divine vengeance (17.5), no other force that has rendered the pagans sensible of that nature which the Son shares with the Father (although they hitherto knew nothing of it)[53] than his proxy on earth, the ever-victorious Constantine who has been drawn in the Son's likeness throughout the discourse. These successes were rendered possible by visitations such as are seldom granted to mortals:

> For you yourself, Emperor, might if you wished you would relate to us countless theophanies of the Saviour, and his presence (*parousias*) in countless dreams. I am not speaking of his inarticulate suggestions to us, but of those implanted in the very mind, which communicated things of common benefit and common utility to your oversight (*pronoia*) of all things. (Eus. *Tric. Orat*. 18.1; pp. 1338c–1340a Migne)

The noun *parousia*, most commonly applied now to the return of Christ, could be applied generically to any manifestation of him in antiquity. *Pronoia*, which we often translate as "providence," is typically a function of the divine,

51 Barnes (1977) 341–345.

52 Eus. *Tric. Orat*. 2.3, 12.8, 14.6, 14.8 (twice), 15.2, 15.4, 15.6, 15.10, 16.6, 17.2.

53 Eus. *Tric. Orat*. 14.6 and 17.3; cf. 4.2 and 12.10 (twice).

although it is here ascribed to the earthly surrogate. The diction is as florid as that of any pagan celebrant, but the unrelenting assimilation of this earthly monarch to his supernal archetype never reaches the point of identification.

7 Epilogue

The *Life of Constantine*, as we have said, is equally circumspect; and yet even in the final chapters of this work an analogy is drawn between the persons of the Trinity and the three sons who succeeded Constantine – a silent ratification of the intrigues by which they eliminated their cousins. The burial of Constantine in the church which he dedicated to the apostles is the final episode, and it was hardly necessary for the historian to remind us who was the Thirteenth at the Last Supper:

> He was deemed worthy of the place that he desired with the apostles, so that even up to the present time it is possible to see the tenement of his thrice-blessed soul being glorified along with the acclamation of the apostles and surrounded in congregation by the people of God. It is deemed worthy of divine ordinances, of mystical[54] ceremonies and the fellowship of holy prayers, while he himself even after death retains his share in the kingdom. (Eus. *Vit. Const*. 4.71.2, p. 496 Bleckmann)

"Whose kingdom?," we may inquire, recalling the intemperate orator at *Life of Constantine* 4.48. It may be said that Christ in the theology of Eusebius is something less than the Father;[55] if any qualification of his divinity is implied however, by the term "second god," it is not any want of omnipotence, justice, wisdom or omniscience.[56] At most – and there is nothing uncommon in this in the early fourth-century – Eusebius denies the Second Person that eternity in the strict sense which is a logical entailment of aseity, or necessary being. In his incarnate form the Son affirms that he can do nothing but by the Father's will,[57] and only in this form can he be an object of emulation for man or

54 On Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; also Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13; on the Orphic mystic rites of the initiates see Chpt. 7, sect. 1 and n. 4; on Egyptian mystic union see Chpt. 3 and nn. 8, 18, 30. On theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13, sect. 1.3 and n. 18; Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, and sect. 3.

55 Strutwolf (1999) 276–375; Robertson (2007) 34–60.

56 See Edwards (2006) 191–195.

57 John 4:34, 5:19, 6:38. see further Barrett (1982) 19–36.

woman. Just as Christ was the literal fulfilment of many prophecies which were hitherto assumed to be hyperbolic or metaphorical, so Constantine, according to Eusebius, has come as near as any mortal can to a full embodiment of the dictum of Irenaeus and Athanasius, "God became human so that we might become god."[58]

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58 Iren. *Ad. Haer*. 5. proem; Athan. *Incarnat*. 54.3. On deification and its limits in Christian thought see Russell (2004).

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PART 2

Religion, Sex and Mythology

∵

CHAPTER 5

Human-Divine Interactions in Homer, Hittite and Other Near Eastern Literary Traditions

Elias K. Petropoulos

1 Introduction

It has long been academically established that certain common elements and motifs can be traced between the *Iliad*, the Hittite and other Near Eastern literary texts.[1] These documents, as well as various archaeological evidence, reveal an emerging complicated cultural syncretism among the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean area during the Late Bronze Age; a process which apparently continued in later times.[2] The communication and exchange of people, goods and ideas in the early years on either side of the Aegean has been studied in depth in recent decades by the archaeologists and ancient historians. Furthermore, modern research has shown that the Aegean sea – since Bronze Age, roughly during the second half of the second millennium BCE, as well as in later years – did not constitute a separating boundary among the different cultures that flourished on either side of the ocean, and more broadly throughout the territory of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, including the wider region of the Black Sea. On the contrary, this extensive geographical area has been a crucial point of continuous bilateral exchange of cultural products and ideas.[3] Within this broad framework of constant communication the various Eastern influences in Homer have been studied focusing on their common narrative elements.[4]

The present chapter pays particular attention to some common themes related to divine unions between the early Greek and the Eastern traditions

1 Petropoulos (2018) 107–262.

2 Cultural contacts are often carried out and expressed as intellectual exchanges among the elite aristocrats who are interested in a particular lifestyle. See Kõiv (2011) 156; Crielaard (2016) 47–48; Petropoulos (2018) 160–163, 173–175.

3 Burkert (1990) 21–22; Noegel (2010) 26–32; Redfern (2012) 93. On the broader area of the Black Sea, see Bauer (2006) 227–242; Jung (2009) 72; Burkert (2010) 7, 24; Stafford (2010) 72–73; Jung and Mehofer (2013) 175–186; Vaessen (2016) 45–46.

4 West (1988) 170; Bachvarova (2008) 23–39; Morris (2009) 718–727; Gilan (2010) 58–60; Kitts (2013) 87–110; Petropoulos (2018) 155–238.

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based on descriptions concerning the relationship and interaction between gods and humans as described in various literary texts from the broad geographic territory of the Near East and the Aegean. More specifically, it examines the relationship between the god Kumarbi of the Hurro-Hittite epic cycle and the great female stone with which/whom this mighty god mated and had a son who is known as *betulus* in the Greek world. There will also be a comparison with similar mythological beliefs from the peoples of the Caucasus region, which are related to the tradition of the heroic "Narts," where the theme of *betulus* plays a very important role in the plot and evolution of the myth. Finally, it will also be examined the divine union between a goddess and a mortal, as described in the Homeric *Iliad*.

This is the divine union of the goddess Thetis with the mortal Peleus, the parents of the greatest hero-warrior of the Homeric epics Achilles. There will be an emphasis to common mythological elements between Achilles, Ullikummi of the Hurro-Hittite tradition, and the hero Sasrykua, as presented through the various traditions of the peoples of Caucasus. All these heroes had a common destiny, which strikes as a result of the particular characteristics of their parents. This distinct background of the parents is what seems to have determined the common fate of their heroes-offsprings. These beliefs about the origins and common destiny of the heroes were shared by most ancient peoples of the geographical area concerned.[5] They also demonstrate a free circulation of cultural ideas and moral values between the Greek and the Eastern world.[6]

2 The Divine Union between Kumarbi and a Female Cliff and the Birth of Their Son Ullikummi in the Epic of Ullikummi

This section deals with the divine union of the mighty god Kumarbi and the female cliff, as described in the Hurro-Hittite epic, which is known as "the epic of Ullikummi." That epic was discovered and written in Hittite cuneiform script and was imprinted on three clay tablets. The overall length of this epic does not exceed 600 lyrics and it is considered to belong to the great epic cycle

5 Schroeder (2001) 147; Patzek (2003) 64–66; Tatišvili (2007) 183–189; Archi (2007) 185ff.; Beckman (2009) 228–234; Sagona and Zimansky (2009) 352–362; Lorenz and Rieken (2010) 227–228; Smith (2010) 37–90; Mouton (2012) 224–227; Weeden (2013) 79–80; Herring (2014) 38–39.

6 Watkins (1986) 58–62; Finkelberg (2005) 5–7; Gilan (2010) 56–57; Pavel (2014) 54; Bachvarova (2016a) 21–22; (2016b) 53–54.

of the Theogony of the Hittites.[7] This is also the last part of the great Hurro-Hittite mythological cycle, with god Kumarbi being the main protagonist[8] (i.e., the god that was overthrown by his son Teššub, who belonged to the younger generation of gods – an exact analogy with Zeus and his deposed father, Cronus).[9]

In the "epic of Ullikummi"[10] as well as in other epics that belong to the tradition of the same mythological cycle it can be observed the effort of god Kumarbi to create a powerful deputy-opponent (^{m}*tarpanallin*, in Hittite)[11] of the younger god *Tarhun* and depose him from his throne with the help of a stone monster, Ullikummi. His name in Hurrian is Ullikummi, while in Hittite he is known under the nickname *kunkunuzzi*, which can be translated as "the stone murderer"; a word derived by the repetition of the Hittite verb *kuen-* = beat, kill. As the author of the epic informs us in the beginning of the text, the younger god of storm, who was the eldest son of god Kumarbi,[12] had to be exterminated by a new god (his brother).

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7 Bachvarova (2016a) 41–48.

8 The "epic of Ullikummi," the "epic of Kumarbi" (CTH 344), the "epic of LAMMA" (CTH 343), the "epic of Silver" CTH 364) and the "epic of *Hedammu*" (CTH 348) as well as some others constitute a single set of the great "Epic Cycle of god Kumarbi," belonging to the same Eastern tradition; Archi (2009) 209–224; Gilan (2010) 57; Ayali-Darshan (2014) 95; Bachvarova (2016a) 25–35. See also Beckman (2005) 260–262; Strauss and Gilan (2014). The Epic Cycle of Kumarbi traces its origins in the Babylonian tradition passed first to the Hurrian and later to the Hittite mythology of Asia Minor; Güterbock (1948) 123; Harrell (1989) 310–316; Morris (2009) 725; Rives (2011) 187–198; Archi (2013) 1 ff.; Bremmer (2013a) 87–100.

9 Güterbock (1948) 123ff.; Dongen (2011) 181ff.; On the process of translation and appropriation of the Hurrian prototype by the Hittites, see Hutter (2003) 251–252; Taracha (2009) 150–151; Podany (2010) 271ff.; Weeden (2013) 75; Archi (2013) 18ff.; Scully (2015) 52; Mieroop (2016) 167. However, there is a possibility that many elements of this tradition come from the time of coexistence of the so-called "Indo-European peoples" in that common territory, namely the Hittites, the Palla, the Luwians and the Mycenaean Greeks. On the Indo-Europeans see Mallory (2010) 71–80.

10 According to Ivanov, in the text of the "epic of Ullikummi" – a translation of a Hurrian prototype during the period of the New Hittite Kingdom (i.e., from the beginning of the 14th century BCE onwards) – certain linguistic elements have been preserved that reflect the era of earlier mythological Hittite traditions with obvious use of the Paleo-Hittite language; Ivanov (2001) 32.

11 On the connection of the Hittito-Luwian word "*tarpanalli*" with the Greek word "θεράπων" see Gindin (1996) 59. On the connection between this Hittito-Luwian word and the Greek ritual of pharmakos, see Petropoulos (2021) 232–254.

12 In the Hurrian texts the theonym *Kumarbi* is found without the proper Hurrian article *-ni* (= *Kum-arbi-ni*). That made some scholars argue that the name could be in genitive; but according to a recent view *Kumarbi* belongs to the old layer of the Hurrian religion; so, this theonym takes the article as a compound: *kum-arbi* 'one hundred years old.' Fournet (2013) 111–112, 160.

According to the narratives of the epic, Ullikummi was delivered by the goddesses-*moirai* and the goddesses-mothers (= of childbirth) and was handed to his father, Kumarbi, who dandled his young son joyously[13] and gave him the name Ullikummi; a composite name that contains the distinctive word *-kummi* that apparently comes from the holy city of the storm god Teššub, *Kummiya*[14] and the Hurrian root *ulli-*, which means "to destroy." He is the fruit of the divine union between god Kumarbi and a female cliff (^{NA4}*pirunas*, as stated in the Hittite text) of large-in-miles dimensions, whom he encountered in a cold lake and mated with. This is not the first time this god falls in love with such a stone. In a passage of another myth (KUB 33.118), Kumarbi feels the same erotic attraction and mates with the mountain-volcano Wāšitta that roars and after ten months (according to the Hittite calendar) gives birth to his child.[15]

Ullikummi had to be, according to his father's conviction, undistracted and fully committed to the work he had to perform, and for that reason he had to be repulsive, monstrous, deaf and blind, without feelings, and indifferent to the female beauty; in short, he had to be a rigid, cold, and insensitive stone. God Kumarbi, overjoyed by the expedient delivery and birth of his son, commands the messenger god *Impalluri* to descend to the Dark Earth and call the goddesses *Irsirres* to take the newborn and carry him to their home, the Dark Earth[16] (i.e., the Underworld), so that he is out of sight until he grows up undisturbed and is capable enough to execute his father's scheming plan. The goddesses followed Kumarbi's order (a fact which proves that even after the dethronement of Kumarbi, some mainly chthonic deities were still loyal to him); they took Ullikummi and, as soon as they reached their final destination in the Underworld, they placed the infant on the right shoulder of the god-titan *Upelluri*, a giant who was holding the sky and earth on his back, just like Atlas of Greek mythology.

Indeed, Ullikummi started to grow rapidly on the strong shoulders of the giant Upelluri, without realising what exactly he was carrying on his back, until he reached the dimensions of an inconceivably huge giant on the fifteenth day.

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13 See Petropoulos (2018) 232–238.

14 In the bilingual Hurro-Hittite text of the "Song of Release" (KBo 32.15, Rs IV, l. 12–14) we read: "^{m}*Me-e-ki-ni-e ti-bi-e-na* ^{d}IM-*ub-u-ta* / *ku-un-zi-ma-e ga-ti-ya ha-ša-ši-la-ab* / ^{d}IM-*ub* ^{URU}*kum-mi-ni-bi da-la-wu$_{u}$-si eb-ri*" (= Meki these words toward Teššub / remaining knelt down, says: / 'May you hear (me), Teššub, strongmost lord of Kummi'). On the geographical location of the city Kummi see Radner (2011) 744–745.

15 Kloekhorst (2016) 165–176.

16 This corresponds to the Hurrian "*timeri eše*" and the homeric γαῖα μέλαινα (Hom. *Il.* 2. 699).

When the sun god (dUTU) started noticing the stone monster growing in him, as he was coming out of the sea like a stone pillar reaching up to the sky, he visited god *Tarhun* in order to inform him about what was taking place against him. The storm god decided with his brother, the god *Tašmisuš* and his sister, goddess *Šauška*,[17] to climb together hand in hand on the mountain Hazziya[18] and witness with their own eyes the monster that god Kumarbi had spawned secretly. The goddess *Šauška*, stricken by panic and incessant fear in the view of Ullikummi, "burst into tears,"[19] tried to charm the monster with her beauty and singing in order to allure and seduce him; but since he was deaf and blind, without feelings and impulses, he could not apprehend what was happening. After that, *Tarhun* with the assistance of other gods decided to strategically attack and kill this stone giant, but they were intercepted and defeated.

After these fruitless efforts, god *Tašmisuš* advises his brother to search and find the god of wisdom Ea, and to consult ancient wise texts, the "ancient tablets."[20] The god of wisdom, after the visit of the storm god, decided to meet the giant that held the sky and the earth on his back to ask for help. He encountered *Upelluri* in the Underworld and witnessed Ullikummi sitting on his right shoulder. After their mutual greetings, the god Ea asked *Upelluri* whether he has heard anything about the opponent that the god Kumarbi was creating against the storm god. The giant was ignorant of him, although he was the supporting body, on which Ullikummi was growing up; and he openly expressed his hatred towards the storm god. However, he stated that something was bothering him on his right shoulder, but he did not know who exactly this god was.[21] Then, the giant appealled to the older gods (*ka-ru-u-i-li-ia-as* DINGIRMEŠ-*as*) to open the house of the seals (É.NA4KISIBHI.A) and cut off Ullikummi from his shoulder, in order to be relieved from the weight, using the

17 Note that in the text the name of this goddess is only attested as a sumerogram dIŠTAR, which is translated in Hurrian as *Šauška* and refers to the Mesopotamian goddess of beauty and fertility.

18 "*…nu-us-ma-as-kan* ŠU-*az ap-pa-an-da-at* / *na-at-kan I-NA* HUR.SAG*Ha-az-zi-ya sa-ra-a pa-a-ir*." According to the Hurro-Hittite tradition, Mount Hazzi was connected with the storm-god; Archi (2009) 220. In Greek mythology it is referred to as "Mount Casius" located near the coast of Syria (Taracha 2009, 120). According to Apollodorus (*Biblioteca* 1.6.3), it is the place where Zeus battles for the first time with the snake Typhon. See Bachvarova (2016a) 256–258; Currie (2016) 203–204; Yasur-Landau and Goshen (2014) 160–161.

19 Similarly, Agamemnon in Hom. *Il.* 1. 13–15 and Patroclus in *Il.* 16. 3–4. On the interpretation of tears in various Hurro-Hittite mythological texts see Torri (2016) 76.

20 "*annallas uddanas tuppiyas appa punusweni*."

21 "*ki-nu-na-mu* ZAG-*an ku-it-ki* UZUZAG.LU-*an* GIG-*zi nu U-UL sa-aq-qa-ah-hi ku-i-sa-as a-si* DINGIR*LIM-is*."

blade (URUDU*ar-da-a-la*) with which the gods had once separated the sky from the earth.[22]

As soon as the god Ea with the help of the special blade removed Ullikummi from the giant, he asked *Tašmisuš* to kill the stone monster. *Tašmisuš* went joyously to the storm god and recounted what took place in the Underworld. Then, all the gods in the place of their council (*du-li-ia-as pi-di*)[23] turned against Ullikummi (DINGIR^{MEŠ} *hu-u-ma-an-te-es A-NA* d*Ul-li-kum-mi*), shouting and calling for his death. After the condemnatory verdict, the storm god with his lightning[24] jumped from the heavens down to the sea (*na-as-kan te-et-hi-es-na-az kat-ta a-ru-ni a-ar-as*) and began fighting with Ullikummi (*na-an za-ah-hi-es-ki-iz-zi* dU-*as* NA$_4$*ku-un-ku-nu-zi-in*), until he killed him. Regarding Ullikummi's death – although the text has not been preserved entirely – the storm god restores order and returns triumphant to his throne.[25]

Another topic related to Ullikummi, which should be discussed within the same framework of research, is the origin, presence and behavior of the new god-monster created by the god Kumarbi to avenge the god of storm and his other enemies. It is an insidious plan of the god Kumarbi, who conceived it on a "bad day," and decided to materialise it by mating with a huge female cliff (*peruna-*) in a cold lake. The mission of the son to be born, the newer god Ullikummi was to carry out the vengeful act on behalf of his father and to assume the position of the storm god, after deposing him from the heavens and subsequently killing him. It turns out that the basic conviction of the Hittite mythographer (as well as his Hurrian predecessor) is proven correct; that is, only a new god could upset the established order in the celestial kingdom and claim succession to the throne.

Regarding the description of the story of the god-monster Ullikummi, some of his characteristics display certain common elements with Achilles' personality,[26] which are scattered and quite fragmentary in Homer's *Iliad*. First, it should be pointed out the description of the key concepts related to the stone son of Kumarbi, Ullikummi, and the tradition of the mother stone-cliff that

22 Something similar was performed by Cronus in Greek mythology to separate Uranus and Gaia, making himself the king of the gods. This is an oriental theme that came to the Greek world from Asia Minor; Bremmer (2004) 39.

23 The theme of the Council of the gods is rather a literary motif that the Hittite translators and authors borrowed from the tradition of other people of the Middle East, such as the Hurrian "Song of Release," mentioned above, in which the council of the elders of the city Ikinkalis is described. Beckman (1982) 438–440; Bryce (2005) 64; Knapp (2015) 73.

24 For the iconographic representations of the god in the broader region of the Near East see Kocaman and Ögüt (2011) 512 ff.

25 Tsymburskiy (2007) 163.

26 Achilles' wrath and its consequences are also described in Philostr. *Her*. 53. 19–21.

is located in an aquatic environment and possesses the ability to give birth to another stone, which may even carry some human characteristics.

Secondly, the mythological theme of a mountain, which can give birth to another mountain of much larger dimensions and even of male gender with certain human characteristics, is widespread in the literature of several peoples. In the Hittite text certain Indo-European terms are used for the description of the mountain,[27] but they come from the Paleo-Hittite language, that is the language that was in use before the translation of the Hurrian text into Hittite.[28] Such are the words like *dalugasti-* [cf. with the Greek "δόλιχος" (= long road) and the Russian "далекий" (= long)], *palhasti-*, as well as the word *peruna-*, which, as mentioned above, means rock [cf. with the central god of the mythology of the Eastern Slavs, Perun (Перун), the almighty god of thunder and lightning and his overall relation with the worship of stone and water]. Furthermore, the same terminology is used to describe the rapidly growing son of the mother-cliff, Ullikummi-*Kunkunuzzi*: "*palḫasti masi* 9 *LI-IM* DANNA," that is, "in terms of its width of 9 thousand DANNA (~ miles)."[29]

Because of the enormous dimensions of Ullikummi, all the younger gods who succeeded god Kumarbi were terrified, as they realized that their supremacy in the heavens was threatened by a younger and stronger god. The reason that the dimensions of both Ullikummi's mother and himself are given in detail is perhaps the author's effort to convince his readers of the potency of abilities-powers of the stone god. Like his mother, Ullikummi is entirely made of stone. Ullikummi's superiority, as suggested by the author of the epic, is mainly due to his stone nature inherited from his mother.

Indeed, as described in the text, when the gods begin concertedly to strike against Ullikummi in order to kill him – but eventually are defeated – or even when the goddess *Šauška* tries to seduce him with her irresistible charms, the stone god seems to be unaware of what is happening. Imperturbable like a real stone and unaffected by anything that could distract him, he has firmly turned his attention towards the achievement of his single goal: the extermination of the younger gods, who dethroned his father, god Kumarbi, and his leadership in the heavens.

Therefore, in Ullikummi's case there is a combination of two opposing hypostases: that of the inanimate stone and that of a living being, which is essentially an animate stone. On the one hand, Ullikummi is presented as a stone monster that does not understand what is taking place in its surround-

27 Ivanov (2015a) 30–31.

28 This seems to be a common occurrence in the Hittite mythography from the 14th c. BCE onwards; Hoffner (1998) 82.

29 This is the only reference preserved in the ancient text about Ullikummi's dimensions.

ings, as he remains lifeless and apathetic, because he is blind, deaf and soulless like a stone; while on the other hand he turns into a relentless human-warrior who is ready at all times to indiscriminately exterminate anything moving in front of him. That alludes to the raging Achilles in the *Iliad*: due to Patroclus' loss, Achilles passes from total apathy to full action after a long period of abstinence from the battlefield, and with his overwhelming presence alone spreads terror in the opposing army and sows death to the Trojans, while at the same time he encourages his low-morale Achaean companions.

3 Male and Female Stones Embodying Human Characteristics and Materializing Divine Power in Near Eastern Literary Traditions

Nowadays, several variants of the examined mythological themes involve stone representations of men as basic protagonists, who either became gods or wished to become gods to exterminate the older ones. Throughout the territory of the ancient East, and particularly in the areas of Hittites[30] and Hurrians in central and Eastern Asia Minor and northern Syria, stone structures are constantly discovered (either carved or unrefined), which were objects of worship of these peoples.[31] As Michel points out, in the Near East region "Stones found in nature or on mountain, near rivers or under trees could have been divine. Amorphous stones were divine, because they were given as such by gods in nature. Taking this evidence into consideration, the aniconic standing stone was seen as the best way to materialize divine power."[32]

There are also populations which have similar characteristics of worshiping sacred stones, such as the Tuvans, i.e., the inhabitants of the Altai Mountains and many neighboring peoples (various populations of Siberia, China, Central Asia, the Far East and in some parts of Europe, mainly in the so-called geographic zone of the forests, and even in the Russian north),[33] where stones are

30 It is the spring festival ^{EZEN}AN.TAH.ŠUM^{SAR} (CTH 604–625) of the Hittites lasting 35–38 days (King Tudhaliyas IV extended the duration of the feast to 40 days), during which the king paid tributes to the stone statues (the sumerogram related to a stone statue is ^{NA4}ZI.KIN, which is pronounced in Hittite as *huwasi*) of the gods in the two cities, Hattusa and Tippuwa, offering bread (NINDA.KUR$_4$.RA), wine (GEŠTIN) and special prayers. Ardzinba (2015) I: 58–60. For this feast and the libations to the stone statue of the god see Hundley (2014) 193–194; Archi (2015) 17–18; Luke and Roosevelt (2017) 17.

31 Ivanov (2015b) 20–21.

32 Michel (2014); also (2015) 64.

33 For a concentrated study on the Russian tradition for about 400 cases of such stones see Vinogradov and Gromov (2006) 125–141.

associated with the incarnation of the pagan god Veles.[34] A common feature of all these people has been still to this day their faith in miraculous stones.[35]

Furthermore, the culture of Tuvans in southern Siberia also believe in the "magical stone *tchat-dash*," among other magical objects of communication with the world of the spirits and dead souls. This transparent stone (crystal) is of small dimensions – a few centimetres in total – and has three or six facets. The Tuvans think that, if one takes a careful look inside that crystal, they could see the sky and the clouds. The use of this gem in the hands of shamans serves purposes of meteorological magic, mainly to invoke rain, snow, wind, or good weather, or even to banish evil.[36]

The archetypal figure of the stone-cliff that possesses female characteristics and is capable of conceiving and giving birth to a stone mythological being with obvious male characteristics is also attested in the peoples who currently live in the broader region of Caucasus and Transcaucasus. It should briefly mentioned here the example of the stone that embodies a hero-man in the mythological cycle of the "Narts" (the so-called "Nartiad,"[37] the heroes of the ancient oral epic traditions, which have been widespread in the region of Abkhazia, Ossetia, Chechnya, Ingushetia and other adjacent areas in the Caucasus). The legend of the "Narts" is also present in the ancient tradition of certain tribes of the multinational Dagestan, as well as of some Georgian ethnic subgroups (such as the Khevshurians, Svans, etc.).[38] It is impressive that many forms and names of the "Narts" have striking similarities in all the epic traditions of these different ethnic groups of the Caucasus.[39] For the contemporary peoples of the Caucasus, the "Nartiad" is a spiritual source of their culture, and it plays the role of philosophy, ethics and basic principles of their self-identification.

The "Nartiad" widespread in the region of Abkhazia displays many archaic elements. Its central heroes are the mother of the "Narts," named Sataney-Guasha, the 100 brothers and the very beautiful daughter Gunda. Each brother has his own name and their own biography with their unique achievements. Thus, the epic of "Nartiad" is composed of separate narrative tales about each

34 Sedov (1998) 875–881.

35 Kisel (2010) 335.

36 Kisel (2010) 332–333.

37 On "Nartiad" see Dumézil (1995) 23–169.

38 See Dzhurtubaev (2013). Most scholars, however, associate the origins of the epic of "Nartiad" with the period of the Cimmerians, Scythians and Alans, who lived in the broader area of the northern Black Sea since the 8th and 7th c. BCE.

39 For a more recent and detailed collection of the tradition of the "Narts" from the region of Abkhazia see Ardzinba (2015) III.

one of them. Among these heroes the *personae* that stand out are the mother Sataney-Guasha and the hero Sasrykua, for whom the mythological cycle includes the most archaic and archetypal mythological elements. Sasrykua is the main protagonist of the Abkhazian "Nartiad," who has retained the most archaic features of an epic hero, and his personality traverses the entirety of the epic creation of the "Nartiad." The cycle of the most important songs and narratives for the hero Sasrykua, which is directly related to our subject, encompasses a variety of themes, such as: a) his miraculous birth from a stone,[40] b) the discovery of fire, and c) his death from a stone (or from the rest Narts).

Several elements of this story allude to similar representations and images from ancient Greek mythology, in which this particular stone is named *betulus*, according to Hesychius: *βαίτυλος*, *οὕτω ἐκαλεῖτο ὁ δοθεὶς λίθος τῷ Κρόνῳ ἀντὶ Διός*, "betulus, thus was named the stone given to Cronus instead of Zeus." Hesiod in his *Theogony*[41] describes exactly how Rhea saved the newborn Zeus from Cronus' mania for devouring his children,[42] as soon as they were born, in order not to fulfill the prophecy that one of them would defeat him and claim the throne.[43] According to a well-known tradition described by the traveler Pausanias,[44] the betulus that Cronus devoured was kept in Delphi, near the tomb of Neoptolemus, and every day the inhabitants applied oil on it, while during its cult it was adorned with special honours. From that point on, the cult of the betulus spread throughout the Greek world.[45] The correlations of this Greek myth with common elements from the Hurro-Hittite mythological tradition of Ullikummi and the god Kumarbi are quite clear, as examined.[46]

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40 On the similarities between Ullikummi and Sasrykua, and the extensions of the stone myth – from which a god is born – as a worshiping phallic symbol that proliferated in the region of Caucasus, see Dzhapua (2004) 619–627. On different versions see Ardzinba (2015) III: 15–16.

41 Hes. *Th.* 453–497.

42 Hence, the connection of human sacrifice with the worship of Cronus, which in some places involved even the sacrifice of little children. This tradition seems to have been abandoned very early, although the term "child-devourer" for Cronus has been preserved until Late Antiquity. Bremmer (2004) 44–45. On the myth of Cronus and its dating see Bremmer (2013b) 57.

43 On this tradition, which may have some connection with the Minoan religion and the depiction of the Cretan young gods on oval shaped stones, see Bremmer (2004) 39–40. On the Semitic origin of the word *betulus*, meaning the "house of god" (he. *bēt 'ēl*), see Rosól (2010) 448. See also Wenning (2001) 80. For a parallelism between the birth of Zeus and Apollo see Penglase (1994) 82–83, 186–189.

44 Paus. *Hel. Per.* 10.24.6.

45 Paus. *Hel. Per.* 7.22.4.

46 On the myth of Poseidon, Bellerophon and Pegasus see Petropoulos (2018) 210–219.

Furthermore, in the early Greek poetry it is mentioned that Zeus was born and raised in the area of Lydia; a fact that may justify the association of certain mythical elements between the mythological tradition of Zeus and the Asia Minor legend of the birth of a god or a hero from a stone.[47] Similarly, that could be replaced by a stone (betulus), even the storm god Teššub was saved by his father, god Kumarbi, according to a version of the Hurro-Hittite myth.[48]

4 The Divine Union/Marriage between Thetis and Peleus and the Birth of Their Son Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*

This section examines the divine union/marriage of Thetis with a mortal, Peleus, and the description of Achilles in the Iliadic text, looking at common elements and similarities between the Homeric hero and the epic of Ullikummi. Although it is not openly stated that Achilles is directly related to some stone or betulus at birth (as, for example, it is in the case of Zeus), it could be observed the first common and very important point with Ullikummi and Sasrykua. This is that the mother of the Homeric hero, the goddess "of the sea" Thetis, the daughter of Nereus, who lived in a cave[49] in the depths of the ocean[50] at her father's side[51] is directly related to the peculiar aquatic, dark and cold world. Similarly, the stone-cliff mother of Ullikummi, as described in the Hittite text, was located in a frozen lake (*i-ku-un-ta lu-u-li*). This aquatic element is also dominant in the case of the birth of Sasrykua.

Furthermore, the main characteristic of Thetis in the entire tradition related to her presence and actions is the distinguishing way of her appearances: she always emerges from the seawaters, representing the ocean itself as well as its tenebrous realm. The aquatic, rayless and cold environment is the first and very important element that unites and identifies with each other. Both the Hittite and the Greek epic heroes, Ullikummi and Achilles, share

47 This is the excerpt F 18B = 4D of a poem by Eumelus of Corinth; Bremmer (2004) 48–49; (2008) 87. The connection of Crete and Caria with Zeus and Korybantes is also revealed in other mythological examples; e.g., see Bremmer (2013b) 60–62.

48 Gilan (2015) 182.

49 Hom. *Il.* 18. 65.

50 The chthonic symbolism of the depth of the sea and its connection to the underworld is a typical motif in the mythology of Mesopotamia. Penglase (1994) 87.

51 Hom. *Il.* 1. 357–359: Ὣς φάτο δάκρυ χέων, τοῦ δ᾽ ἔκλυε πότνια μήτηρ / ἡμένη ἐν βένθεσσιν ἁλὸς παρὰ πατρὶ γέροντι· / καρπαλίμως δ᾽ ἀνέδυ πολιῆς ἁλὸς ἠΰτ᾽ ὀμίχλη, "So he spoke, weeping, and his lady mother heard him, as she sat in the depths of the sea beside the old man, her father. And speedily she came out from the gray sea like a mist." Murray (1924).

this common feature with regards to the origin of their mothers. Regarding to Ullikummi's mother, no extra attributes are mentioned in the oriental epic, with the exception of her large dimensions; while for Thetis more information can be drawn from the ancient Greek tradition and mainly from *Iliad*. Another important episode is Thetis' connection to the liberation of Zeus, when the three Olympian gods, Athena, Hera and Poseidon, conspired against Zeus and decided to bind him up in chains.[52]

The story continues with Thetis eventually getting married to Peleus with Zeus' consent. According to the tradition, the marriage of a goddess with a mortal was meant as a punishment and degradation for the goddess herself.[53] The fruit of this union was the birth of the semi-god hero Achilles, whom his mother bathed in the waters of Styx in Helmos to secure his immortal life, although a part on his heel was left dry. That was the only vulnerability in the body of the Homeric hero, which eventually costed his life, even though Thetis did everything to protect her son. After all, according to some scholars,[54] even the etymology[55] of his name refers to his mother's attempt to protect him from imminent death: Achilles = the one who overcomes death, directly related to the pre-Homeric, Indo-European myth of the victory over death, from the root *-*u̯l-* (= "kill, die," cf. with the corresponding Hittite verb *walh-* = attack, beat); similarly the name of the Hittite stone-hero Ullikummi-*kunkunuzi*, in which, as examined, the Hittite verb *kuen-* (= kill) is duplicated, while the same applies to Ullikummi's Hurrian name, from the root *ull-*.

According to the ancient tradition,[56] Peleus did not want their son to become immortal, and because of that Thetis became enraged; also when Achilles was still a young child, she abandoned them forever returning to her natural habitat, the depths of the sea.[57] The father alone took the boy and carried him down to the cave of the centaur Chiron, to whom he entrusted his son's upbringing. There Achilles received not only a remarkable education and training but also a special nutritional treatment to enhance his physical

52 Hom. *Il.* 1. 396–406. Pi. *I.* 8. 26–57. See also Slatkin (1991) 64–77. On Titans and the three Hecatoncheires see Bremmer (2004) 37–60. On Briareos and his connection with the island of Euboea see Boffa and Leone (2017) 384–386. On the depiction of the Nereids in ancient Greek art see Barringer (1995) 49. On the connection of the worship of Achilles with the Nereids see Mavrojannis (1994) 291–347.

53 Aston (2009) 99.

54 Nikolaev (2010) 277–291.

55 On the etymological interpretation of his name, see Nagy (1994) 3–9.

56 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.6.

57 In *Iliad* it is not entirely clear whether Thetis had left her home or eventually stayed with her husband and child. Khimin (2012) 249–256.

vigour. Thus, after Thetis left them, Peleus and Achilles found shelter in the isolated cave of the wise centaur, where the young Achilles reached manhood away from the sight of the outside world.

That alludes to the myth of Ullikummi, the special upbringing of whom his father entrusted to the goddesses *Irsirres*. As examined, they carried him on the command of god Kumarbi down to the "Dark Earth" and placed him on the strong shoulder of the titan-god in order to grow up there safely and away from the suspicious eyes of the younger gods. The distinct mother of the stone god-monster is absent from the rest of the text and she is not included in any further reference to her son, as she is trapped and motionless inside the cold lake. On the contrary, in the *Iliad* Thetis is kept informed about her son after coming in Troy as the head of the Myrmidon warriors from Phthia; and she tries to help him by mediating to the gods, although she knows very well that his premature death woven by the *Moirai* and gods is very close.

Thus, it is possible to distinguish some common points between Achilles and the stone god Ullikummi, such as: a) their descendance on a mother closely related to the dark and cold aquatic environment in the abyss of the sea, while her stone composition may have been common in both cases at some point before the Homeric Age; b) the strange birth from the union of two individuals representing two different worlds (human-divine); c) they are all male; d) the general theme of rage and revenge, which are also expressed in the names of the two heroes; e) the semi-divine origin; f) their separation from their mothers in infancy; g) the detached from the world coming of age in both cases, under circumstances of isolation, and the special treatment by "guardians" of superhuman powers in order to gain physical vigour and be able to meet in the future the specific requirements concerning the theme of revenge; h) their premature death; and finally i) the relationship of both of them with the Underworld and the realms of the dead.[58] Sasrykua could also be connected with most of the aforementioned remarks.[59]

The aforementioned observations allude to Homer's lines in the *Odyssey*, when the king of Ithaca in his visit to Hades in 'Nekyia' addresses Achilles with the following words:

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58 On the chthonic characteristics of Achilles' personality see Hommel (1981) 64, 72; Hedreen (1991) 313–330; Klein (1998) 324–345. On some objections to this topic see Tokhtasyev (2008) 198.

59 It seems very likely that Achilles (also Ullikummi) shares many of these features with another mythical hero from the Eastern Black Sea region, Amiran, who also belongs to the Caucasian mythological tradition. See Tuite (2007) 23–50.

… σεῖο δ᾽, Ἀχιλλεῦ
οὔ τις ἀνὴρ προπάροιθε μακάρτατος οὔτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ὀπίσσω
πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζωὸν ἐτίομεν ἶσα θεοῖσιν
Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν
ἐνθάδ᾽ ἐών: τῷ μή τι θανὼν ἀκαχίζευ, Ἀχιλλεῦ[60]

… whereas no man before this was more blessed than you, Achilles,
nor shall ever be hereafter. For before, when you were alive,
we Argives honored you equally with the gods,
and now that you are here, you rule mightily among the dead.
Therefore, grieve not at all that you are dead, Achilles
(Murray, 1919)

These lyrics of *Odyssey* allude to Achilles' blessedness, his connection with the *Fortunate Isles* and his divine origins, since he is described in the text as "the lord of the dead."

Hommel argues that what is strikingly amazing in these verses is the tragedy of the god, who became mortal and then regained his divine status as the lord of the dead.[61] Thus, it is remarkable the way in which devotional beliefs continue to be preserved over the centuries, although they are inevitably subject to significant alterations and modifications.[62] Moreover, the name Achilles had been evidently known since the Mycenaean times as "*a-ki-re-u*" and "*a-ki-re-we*";[63] therefore, it cannot be an invention of the epic rhapsodists of the 10th or the 9th c. BCE. It is impossible, however, with the extant evidence to identify the name on the signs of Pylos and Knossos with the god of the dead or the swift-footed hero of the Homeric epic.[64] It is very likely that this name was widespread among the classes of common people.[65] In support of Achilles' chthonic hypostasis, it should be added one more element: the legend of Aiakos, the son of Zeus and the nymph

60 Hom. *Od.* 11.482–486.

61 Edwards (1985) 216–227.

62 Hommel (1981) 64–65. Toporov (1990) 64–90 refers to the chthonic nature of the pre-Homeric Achilles, suggesting a correlation with the characteristics of a snake compared to the Hurro-Hittite myth of the ^{MUŠ}*Illuyanka*.

63 Ventris and Chadwick (1956) 415.

64 That could be observed for many other names of the Greek mythology, which are mentioned in the Mycenaean tablets, e.g., Deukalion and Pyrrha (KN Ap 639.11: *pu-wa*). However, it is impossible to identify them with the later written tradition of the Flood. On the myth of the Flood see Bremmer (2008) 101–116.

65 Klein (1998) 329.

Aegina, well-known in Greek mythology.[66] After his death in Troy Achilles, according to Pindar,[67] is transported by his mother to the Black Sea, and more specifically to the Island of Leuke opposite the mouth of the Danube, where the Milesian settlers built his sanctuary around the middle of the 7th c. BCE.[68]

All these elements suggest that in Achilles' personality there are common ties between the Greek mythological cycle of this Homeric hero and pre-homeric nether god with the antecedent Hurro-Hittite epic tradition of the god-hero born from a stone, who comes exclusively from the region of Asia Minor. It is now considered very likely that the origins of the myth about the birth of a god from a stone, who later became a hero or god, originate to an earlier religious tradition of the indigenous population of the so-called Hattians[69] (i.e., the non-Indo-European race that lived mainly in the north coast of Asia Minor during the second half or the end of the third millennium BCE, before the arrival of the Indo-European tribes).[70] One of these Hattian/Hittite religious beliefs is the worship of the deceased queen (e.g., Tanuhepa/Danuhepa, of Hurrian origin, the wife of King Mursili II or rather of Muwatalli II, and the mother of Kurunta, son of the king),[71] the predominant element of which is the perception that the descent into the realm of the dead means the transition of the soul from the dead body to a stone idol.[72] Therefore, perhaps the tradition of worship and the general religious conduct towards the stone is originally connected with the indigenous people of Hatti of Asia Minor, from where it could have been transmitted later on to the Near East and the Greeks.

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66 Polinskaya (2013) 126–129; Hommel (1981) 75–76. On the mythological connection of Myrmidons with the Northwest Greece and Epirus see Kitellä (2013) 35–36. On Aiakos see Howatson (2011); on the origin of the word "Myrmidons" see Braginskaya (1993) 231–250.

67 Pi. *O.* 2.

68 Okhotnikov and Ostroverkhov (2007) 546–550; Hupe (2006).

69 Bryce (2005) 11–15.

70 Goedegebuure (2008) 46–72; Soysal (2008) 58–72. On the various Hattian features of the feast that the Hittites called KI.LAM see Archi (2015) 13–14: "The Hittites received from the Hattians not only the gods for their official pantheon together with the related cultural ceremonials, but also the belief that the land had to supply its gods with food consigned yearly by those who represented the central administration in each of the major centres." See also Ardzinba (2015) II.

71 Singer (2002) 98–99; Bryce (2005) 210–211, 242–245; On the Queen's adventurous biography and the number of people with the same name see Cammarosano (2010) 47–61; Hout (1998) 45.

72 On the deer in the Hittite and Asia Minor traditions see Collins (2003) 73–82. On similar Egyptian traditions see Ivanov (2015b) 34.

To conclude with the common elements between the myth of Achilles and the myth of Ullikummi, in Rhapsody 16 of *Iliad* in the conversation between Achilles and Patroclus, the latter blames the first for undue inaction, heartlessness and apathy at the sight of so many dead and wounded Achaean comrades. This is where Patroclus addresses Achilles using such strong words that noone else would even dare say:

> σὺ δ' *ἀμήχανος* ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.
> ἠ ἐμέ γ' οὖν οὕτός γε λάβοι χόλος, ὃν σὺ φυλάσσεις
> *αἰναρέτη·* τί σευ ἄλλος ὀνήσεται ὀψίγονός περ
> αἴ κε μὴ Ἀργείοισιν ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἀμύνῃς;
> *νηλεές*, οὐκ ἄρα σοί γε πατὴρ ἦν ἱππότα Πηλεύς,
> οὐδὲ Θέτις μήτηρ · *γλαυκὴ δέ σε τίκτε θάλασσα*
> *πέτραι τ' ἠλίβατοι, ὅτι τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής.*
> εἰ δέ τινα φρεσὶ σῇσι θεοπροπίην ἀλεείνεις
> καί τινά τοι πὰρ Ζηνὸς ἐπέφραδε πότνια μήτηρ[73]
>
> … but you are impossible to deal with, Achilles.
> Never on me let such wrath lay hold, as the wrath you cherish,
> you whose valor causes harm! How will any other yet to be born
> have profit of you,
> if you do not ward off loathsome destruction from the Argives?
> Pitiless one, your father, it appears, was not the horseman Peleus,
> nor was Thetis you mother, but the gray sea bore you,
> and the sheer cliffs, since your mind is unbending.
> But if in your thoughts you are shunning some oracle,
> and your queenly mother has declared to you anything from Zeus …
> (Murray, 1925)

All these characteristic elements that Homer uses through Patroclus as reprehension – in order to express his profound indignation for the attitude and general behavior of Achilles, who was enraged due to the insulting humiliation suffered by Agamemnon, with the natural consequence for Achilles to be absent from the Trojan battles – could refer to the corresponding aforementioned characteristics mentioned of Ullikummi in the Hittite text: "inexorable," "cruelly brave," "merciless," "he who was not born human in a natural way by a father and a mother, but the grey ocean and the lofty rocks gave birth to

73 Hom. *Il.* 16. 29–37.

him in an unreal and inconceivable manner; for his mind is cruel." One could assume at this point that these verses have preserved some elements from the pre-Homeric figure of Achilles, who should have a direct connection with the Underworld as the god of the dead.

In another passage Homer addresses Odysseus through the words of the "godlike" Ajax:

> αὐτάρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
> *ἄγριον ἐν στήθεσσι θέτο μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν*
> *σχέτλιος, οὐδὲ μετατρέπεται φιλότητος ἑταίρων*
> *τῆς ᾗ μιν παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτίομεν ἔξοχον ἄλλων*
> *νηλής·* καὶ μέν τίς τε κασιγνήτοιο φονῆος
> ποινὴν ἢ οὗ παιδὸς ἐδέξατο τεθνηῶτος·
> καί ῥ᾽ ὃ μὲν ἐν δήμῳ μένει αὐτοῦ πόλλ᾽ ἀποτίσας,
> τοῦ δέ τ᾽ ἐρητύεται κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
> ποινὴν δεξαμένῳ· *σοὶ δ᾽ ἄληκτόν τε κακόν τε*
> *θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι θεοὶ θέσαν εἵνεκα κούρης*
> οἴης· νῦν δέ τοι ἑπτὰ παρίσχομεν ἕξοχ᾽ ἀρίστας,
> ἄλλά τε πόλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τῇσι· *σὺ δ᾽ ἵλαον ἔνθεο θυμόν*.[74]
>
> ... But Achilles
> has worked up to fury the proud heart within him,
> hard man, nor does he regard the love of his comrades
> with which we honored him among the ships above all
> others-pitiless one! A man accepts recompense even from
> the slayer of his brother, or for his dead son;
> and the slayer remains in his own land if he pays a great price,
> and the kinsman's heart and proud spirit are restrained by
> the taking of compensation. But as for you, the gods have
> put in your breast
> a heart that is obdurate and evil because of one girl only;
> but we now offer you seven, far the best that are,
> and many other gifts besides. So, make your heart gracious ...
> (Murray, 1924)

So big was the anger of Achilles that his "proud heart" turned "wild" to such an extent that "not even the kindness of his companions was able to soothe the

74 Hom. *Il.* 9. 628–639.

rage of the ruthless Achilles." And all these because "the gods have put in his breast a heart that is obdurate and evil"; while in another passage it is pointed out:

> …νῦν δή Ἀχιλλῆος *ὀλοὸν κῆρ*
> γηθεῖ ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φόνον καὶ φύζαν Ἀχαιῶν
> *δερκομένῳ*, ἐπεὶ οὔ οἱ ἔνι φρένες οὐδ᾽ ἠβαιαί[75]
>
> … now indeed, I think,
> does the destructive heart of Achilles rejoice in his breast
> as he looks upon the slaughter and rout of the Achaeans,
> since he has no understanding, no, not a trace.
> (Murray, 1925)

Finally, an additional point in the list of common elements is the scene where Thetis meets the embittered Achilles and tries with endearments to calm down and appease the acrimony and rage of her only son:

> Τὸν δ᾽ ἠμείβετ᾽ ἔπειτα Θέτις κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσα·
> Ὤ μοι, τέκνον ἐμόν, τί νύ σ᾽ ἔτρεφον *αἰνὰ τεκοῦσα*;
> αἴθ᾽ ὄφελες παρὰ νηυσὶν ἀδάκρυτος καὶ ἀπήμων
> ἧσθαι, ἐπεί νύ τοι αἶσα μίνυνθά περ οὔ τι μάλα δήν·
> νῦν δ᾽ ἅμα τ᾽ *ὠκύμορος καὶ ὀϊζυρὸς* περὶ πάντων
> ἔπλεο· *τώ σε κακῇ αἴσῃ τέκον* ἐν μεγάροισι.
> τοῦτο δέ τοι ἐρέουσα ἔπος Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ
> ἶμ᾽ αὐτὴ πρὸς Ὄλυμπον ἀγάννιφον αἴ κε πίθηται[76]
>
> Then, shedding tears, Thetis answered him:
> 'Alas, my child, why did I rear you, cursed in my child-bearing?
> If only it had been your lot to stay by your ships without tears
> and without grief, since your span of life is brief and will not last long;
> but now you are doomed to a speedy death and are unfortunate
> above all men; therefore, it was for an evil fate that I bore you in our halls.
> Yet to tell what you have said to Zeus who hurls the thunderbolt
> I will go my-self to snowy Olympus, in the hope that he will listen
> (Murray, 1924)

75 Hom. *Il.* 4.139–141.
76 Hom. *Il.* 1.413–420.

Achilles' "bad fate" is the cause of "all evil" both for himself and his comrades and companions; that justifies his bad behavior towards his fellow soldiers. His sympathetic mother refers to her son's fate in her speech, as she is well aware that her son was not destined to live much longer. Similarly, the same "bad fate" (*nu* HUL-*lu-un* UD.KAM-*an* ^{LÚ}HUL-*an sal-la-nu-us-ki-iz-zi*) is described in the first verses of the epic of Ullikummi, illustrating the "bad behavior" of the stone son of god Kumarbi during adulthood. He is the younger god destined to "kill the storm god" and "throw the gods from their heavenly kingdom down to the earth as if they were birds,"[77] so he could claim the sceptre of power. However, this "bad fate" would be fulfilled with Ullikummi's untimely death by the god of the storm, before he even had the chance to attain full growth. Similarly, the same brief lifespan was allotted by the gods and destiny to the "short-lived and miserable" Achilles.

5 Conclusions

The examination of influences and similarities related to human-divine unions and their offspring in Homeric texts and literary texts from the Near East in this chapter could lead to the general conclusion that the widespread dissemination of some mythological traditions to the peoples of the Near East and the Aegean during the second and first millennium BCE was a very important common cultural element.[78] In the Homeric *Iliad* some fundamental patterns have been preserved from the myth of Ullikummi, the tradition of which the poet himself was very likely to have known in its oral or perhaps even written form. More specifically, as examined, this is a widespread myth in Asia Minor of a hero born from a stone or a cliff – or in any case his birth is related somehow to the involvement of a stone (*betulus*). The birth of this betulus-hero occurs in a very extraordinary and impressionable manner, and usually after a bizarre sexual union: between a god and a female mortal or vice versa, though this union always retains its unusual nature. The element of water plays a key role in all three mythological examples that have been examined. All these features constitute an essential prerequisite for ancient people, so that the descendant (usually a son) can possess superhuman abilities. The Greek tra-

77 "DINGIR^{MEŠ}-*ma-wa-kan hu-u-ma-an-du-us* [*ne-pi-s*]*a-az* GAM MUSEN$^{HI.A}$ GIM-*an*."

78 Komoróczy (1973) 45; West (1997) 276–305; Bremmer (2008) 3; Petropoulos (2018) 175–201. See also Hoffner (1968) 199; (1998) 85–87; Dardano (2017) 804–806. On the musical traditions of the peoples of Asia Minor during the late Bronze Age see Canevaro (2014) 99–100; Musiał (2013) 50; Bremmer (2004) 55–60.

dition of the betulus, as it is found in Hesiod and related to the birth of Zeus and his father Cronus, has a clear connection with corresponding motifs from the Hurro-Hittite mythology associated with Ullikummi and his father, the god Kumarbi. Hesiod was probably well aware of the betulus myth, as well as the particular "epic of Ullikummi."

Our examination has revealed common attributes, connections and similarities between Ullikummi, the heroized Achilles and the Caucasian hero Sasrykua. That was illustrated by a detailed comparison and juxtaposition of certain elements related to the birth, character, and premature death of the stone hero Ullikummi, as described in the text of the homonymous Hittite epic, with corresponding elements from the Iliadic text that referred to Achilles. This myth appears to have existed in the prehistoric times within a sufficiently narrow geographical area, extending from the Northern Black Sea region and mainly from Caucasus to the west coast of Asia Minor. The beliefs of the native people of Hatti may have been a possible central source, according to the Hattian custom examined in detail.

Thus, Homer probably received a rather rich (mainly oral) legacy from earlier times, having been complemented and enhanced with various elements and traits that came from the East as a result of these intense contacts and interactions. Moreover, Homer (and the early Greek epic production in general), after some necessary processing and adaptation, incorporated these elements in his epic poems, thus closing and sealing the entire prehistory of Greeks at the threshold of the new historical era that dawned on the horizon. In the process of appropriating a foreign pre-existing cultural tradition also each tribe inevitably added over the centuries their distinctive mark, preserving from the original text only the necessary central idea.[79]

More specifically, it is the great mythological cycle of the heroized animated stone (*betulus*), the roots of which are lost in the mists of the prehistoric age in Asia Minor, that is in the area of the proliferation of the Hattian culture and is still preserved in our days in the mythological traditions of some people from the Altai Mountains, Northern Europe and perhaps even further in the West. The most important of these common features between Ullikummi and Achilles (and most likely Sasrykua) could be summarized as follows:

a) their origin from a mother who is closely related to the dark and cold aquatic environment into the abyss of the sea, while her stone composition may be common in both cases at some point before the Homeric era,

79 Bremmer (2004) 46; Morris (2009) 749; Cline (2009) 173; Bachvarova (2013) 39, n. 73; Wikander (2013) 144; Scully (2015) 51.

b) the strange birth from human-divine union of two individuals representing two different worlds (human-divine),
c) their semi-divine origin,
d) their separation from their mother in infancy,
e) their detached from the world coming of age under strict isolation and the special treatment received from "guardians" of superhuman powers, so they could acquire robustness, in order to be able to satisfy and cope with certain future requirements concerning the theme of revenge,
f) they are all male (Achilles, Ullikummi, Sasrykua, Amiran),
g) the general theme of anger and revenge is also expressed in the names of the two heroes (Ullikummi, Achilles),
h) their premature death,
i) and finally, their relation with the underworld and the kingdom of the dead: for Ullikumi the reference "GE$_6$ KI-*pi*" in the Hittite text (full reading in Hittite = "*dankui daganzipi*") is indicative; i.e., he was led to the "black, dark land" (= the underworld) to grow up on the shoulders of the titan god Upelluri, from where he would fight in the future the fierce and cruel god of storms; while for Achilles many elements of his life had shown chthonic features with direct or indirect references to the underworld. It should also be pointed out that Achilles was a god of the underworld in prehistoric times; and that after his death in the Homeric Odyssey he was considered as a god of the underworld and the dead.

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CHAPTER 6

Θεῶν Φίλτρα: Sexual Union between Gods and Mortals

Robert Parker

1 Primeval

That gods lay with mortal women and sired children by them is such a familiar feature of Greek mythology that we tend not to notice it. Such unions are mentioned spasmodically in Homer and become systematized as a framework for presenting a heroic genealogy of the whole of Greece in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*. That poem announces itself, in its fragmentary opening lines (*Fr.* 1. M/W), as an account of the women "who then were best …and undid their girdles … in union with gods; for then banquets and seats were shared between immortal gods and mortal men." Some of the gods who lay with mortal women are at once mentioned, Zeus, Poseidon, Ares, Hermes, Heracles …. The poem goes on to catalogue the various lineages of heroes via the ancestresses whose sexual encounters with gods lay at their origin. A different aspect of these relations emerges in Euripides' *Troades*, where the chorus lament (821–858) that their city's two erotic connections with gods (Ganymede with Zeus; Tithonos with Dawn) have failed to earn it protection. Ideally then it should be to the benefit of a community if one of its ancestors once caught the fancy of a god or goddess. But the Trojans have been let down: 'the gods' love ties to Troy are gone' (τὰ θεῶν δὲ φίλτρα φροῦδα Τροίαι).

Divine unions remain ubiquitous in all the subsequent literary forms that take over the mythological worldview unchallenged: lyric, tragedy (with rare exceptions), prose mythography (both its early forms and still, for instance, Apollodorus), secondary epic (e.g., Apollonius), oracular responses,[1] display oratory.[2] To comedy it is a gift;[3] to Jewish and Christian critics of the Greek gods it is also, in a different way, a gift. Where such myths attracted the

1 For the last see the Delphic response reported in Paus. 2.26.7.

2 So e.g., Lib. *Progymn.* 13.1.4, in exhortations to marriage; in the prose hymns of Aristides, Parker (2016) 75.

3 E.g., Ar. *Av.* 555–560; Plaut. *Amph.*

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attention of rationalizers, the concern was to remove ἀδύνατα such as metamorphosis, not to deny the possibility of divine unions.[4]

The *Catalogue* clearly implies that the age of seats and banquets shared between men and gods came to an end. About women undoing their girdles for gods it is less clear. Some have supposed that the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* describes a deliberate design of Zeus to bring god-mortal unions to an end.[5] Zeus, the *Hymn* tells us, inspired in Aphrodite desire for Anchises so that she too might experience a human's bed, and no longer boast with a smile of forcing gods into the arms of mortal women, goddesses into those of mortal men (45–52; cf. 248–255). Aphrodite will no longer be able to boast, it is argued, because such unions will no longer occur. It is not a decisive counter-argument that Aphrodite's affair with Anchises was not in fact, in mythological time, the last such affair to occur; the poet is not bound to consistency with the whole mythological tradition. (But equally, even if the poet had been depicting such a pivotal moment, his invention would not at once have become canonical). And it might be frivolous to object that it was scarcely in Zeus' own interest to ban such unions! But the emphasis of the text seems to lie not on the fact of gods and mortals having intercourse, but on Aphrodite's offensive boasting of the power she exerts over her fellow gods. Caught in her own trap, Aphrodite will no longer be able to jeer. But the poem gives no sign that the unions will not continue. In ritual they certainly did, though without producing offspring. At Athens, the wife of the archon basileus was 'given as wife to Dionysus' every year.[6]

Objections arose, however, from two separate directions to the idea that they had ever occurred. Xenophanes famously accused Homer and Hesiod of ascribing human failings to gods: stealing, adultery, deceiving one another.

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4 Thus Palaephatus, *Περὶ ἀπίστων* 15, argues that if Zeus had wanted to take Europa to Crete, he would not have forced her to travel on a bull; the common rationalisation of the Danae myth (see e.g., Hom. *Od.* 3.16), whereby "shower of gold" = bribery, leaves Zeus as the perpetrator. Palaephatus 42, has Io impregnated by a mortal, but to avoid the *metamorphosis*.

5 For references, and detailed criticism, see Faulkner (2008) 10–18; brief dissent also in Richardson (2010) 250 (note on 247–251).

6 Apollod. *Neaer.* 73; cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 3.5; Parker (2005) 303–305. I note there that this is the only certainly attested case. Stories of monarchs entering on 'marriage' with goddesses worshipped in rich temples in order to claim from them huge dowries [e.g., II Macc. 1. 13–16, Antiochus IV and Artemis/Nanaia at Elam: cf. Lightfoot (2003) 42, n. 93] seem to derive from Mesopotamian traditions (whether enacted in ritual is much debated) of unions between monarchs and goddesses; Lapinkivi (2004); Hallo (2010) 231–236. What underlies the description of Mesopotamian priestesses (often royal princesses) as 'spouses' of the gods they serve is apparently unclear: see e.g., Sallaberger and Huber Vulliet (2005) 626–628, though Weadock (1975) 102 had spoken cheerfully of 'sacred marriage.'

Whether with adultery he was referring to Ares' entanglement with Aphrodite in the *Odyssey* or to the many myths of gods' affairs, some of them technically adulterous, with mortals is not clear. But both the one and the other are clearly incompatible with his conception of the divine nature. Henceforth, philosophers barely even bother to polemicise against the idea of sexual union between god and mortal: the notion is too ridiculous to demand refutation. The Epicurean speaker in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*[7] dismisses 'intercourse (of gods) with mortals and the procreation of mortals from an immortal' as one of the superficially attractive but outrageous and damaging conceptions put about by poets. Philodemus in *On Piety* lists the old stories not to criticise them as untrue but, it seems, to undermine critics who make selective appeal to mythology to attack Epicurus: since such myths are manifestly ridiculous, they undermine any attempt to detect valuable truth lurking in poetic mythology.

The only serious discussion of the possibility in a philosophically-trained writer comes in Plutarch. He twice flirts with a refined variant of the idea of divine union which he derives explicitly from Egyptian sources.[8] A speaker in the *Quaestiones Conviviales* (8.1.2, 717d) observes that 'those ascribing Plato's engendering to Apollo' do not defame the god, given that the philosopher was a doctor for mankind of the worst diseases; he mentions the supposed dream warning to Plato's mortal father to avoid intercourse with his wife for nine months. An interlocutor objects that procreation implies change and so is incompatible with divine incorruptibility, but goes on to suggest that the result might be achieved not through carnal intercourse but by some different form of contact. The Egyptians, he adds, 'say that Apis is brought forth through the touch of the moon, and more broadly they allow intercourse between a male god and a mortal woman,' but not vice versa (*Quaest. Conv*. 8.1.3 717E–718B). The Egyptian theory, here rather obscurely adumbrated, is clarified by a passage in the *Life of Numa* (4.1–12) where Plutarch discusses the story that Numa became expert in divine matters as the lover of Egeria. This resembles, he says, old myths about Attis and Rhodoitos and Endymion (i.e., instances of contact between a mortal man and a goddess). It is reasonable to suppose, he goes on, that god should be not horse-loving or bird-loving but man-loving, but not that a god should take pleasure in a mortal body and form. The Egyptians, however,

7 Cic. *N.D.* 1.16.42: (*deorum*) *cum humano genere concubitus mortalisque ex inmortali procreatos*. In 3.17.45 the academic Cotta objects to the other possible consequence, gods born from mortal mothers. Philodemus: Luppe (1984); Obbink (1996) 606. Luc. *Astr*. 20 dismisses the idea of divine parentage as οὐχ ὅσιον: on this text's perhaps self-subverting intentions see Holford-Strevens ap. Lightfoot (2003) 195, n. 502.

8 See Babut (1969) 466–469.

plausibly suggest that a 'breath of god' (πνεῦμα θεοῦ) could enter woman, but not vice versa. Norden showed that Plutarch is here picking up an ancient Egyptian royal myth whereby the queen is visited by Amon-Re in the guise of her husband and conceives the future Pharaoh. [9] But Plutarch raises this idea only to reject it: any mixing affects both elements of the mixture, and this would imply the immortal being affected by the mortal. He provisionally admits the lesser claim that 'friendship' between the two breeds 'would be appropriate.' But he ends by allowing that the other story, whereby the supposed divine contacts of lawgivers are just a political invention to awe the masses, makes sense too.[10] And such is the main tenor of his treatment of the supposed begetting of Alexander by Zeus Ammon: a useful story exploited by Alexander to impress others (Plut. *Alex*. 28.6).

Philosophy thus has no truck with physical union between god and mortal. History too, in the person of Herodotus, rejects it. He reports the Egyptian priests' famous counter-claim to Hecataeus, who had 'genealogised himself to a god in the sixteenth generation,' that they could trace Egyptian ancestry over 335 generations, all mortal, and did not accept that a man could be born from a god (2.143). And, in his own person, Herodotus systematically (with one exception, easily explained as a slip) omits the divine parent of heroes traditionally born from a divine-mortal mixed marriage.[11] He explicitly rejects one claim to divine descent (4.5.1), as also the Chaldaeans' belief that Zeus Belos visits his prophetess by night (1.182; he surely doubts the two comparable cases there mentioned too). As Fowler notes,[12] sex between man and god is still accepted in the early prose mythographers, and had thus survived the transition from verse to prose; it vanishes, amid much else, in Herodotus' quiet but radical challenge to the whole mythological tradition. Divine filiation is absent thenceforth from mainstream history, though local historians continue

9 Norden (1924) 76–92, 'Die Erzeugung aus dem Pneuma'; he finds the same idea in Philo, *De Cherubim*, 12–15 (40–52), and in the biblical story of Jesus' conception; cf. too the Egyptian priests' belief reported in Hdt. 1. 182. For fuller references on the Egyptian background, and its probably influence on the myth of Heracles, see works cited by Fowler (2013) 264, n. 16.

10 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 2.61 reports this view of Numa, and declines to judge the complicated issue; it is straightforwardly accepted by Liv. *Ann*. 1.19.5.

11 See Harrison (2000) 88–89, who speaks of 'a fairly settled unwillingness to accept the possibility of gods sleeping with mortals.' Hdt. 6.53.1–2, where he stresses that he stops at Perseus because no mortal father of Perseus is known, unlike in the case of Amphitryon, is particularly revealing.

12 Fowler (2010) 326–327, rightly stressing Herodotus' radicalism. Even Hellanicus has divine unions, Fowler (2000) *Fr*. 19.

to record instances from the mythological period without explicit reservations;[13] in this they adhere to the mythographic side of their own dual filiation. A passage in Plato's *Lysis* (205C–D) gives us a hint of the tone probably adopted henceforth by the educated. Socrates' interlocutor Ktesippos tells how one Hippothales has written a panegyric in verse of his boy-friend Lysis, in which he claims inter alia that Lysis' ancestor was kin to Heracles, being born of Zeus and the daughter of the archegete of the deme, 'as old women sing.' The legend is reduced to the status of an 'old women's myth,' where 'myth' has acquired its modern connotations of falsehood.[14] But quiet mockery by the sophisticated could not abolish the appetite for distinguished descent. Genealogies sometimes now stopped with figures such as Heracles or the Dioskouroi,[15] thus leaving unresolved whether these 'demigods' truly had divine parents, but the Ptolemies, for instance, unabashedly claimed double descent from Zeus, via Heracles on the paternal and Dionysus on the paternal side.[16]

Pausanias in the main shows himself a good Herodotean in either attributing claims about divine descent to informants without endorsing them, or openly expressing doubt.[17] But speaking of Trophonios he writes, strikingly, 'Trophonios is said to be a son of Apollo and not of Erginos. I believe that, and so will anyone who has been to Trophonius to consult the oracle' (9.37.5). The intensity of the experience of consulting Trophonius wins him over.[18] About Asclepius too (2.26.3–7) his uncertainties are about the identity of the mortal mother, not the paternity of Apollo (his final verdict on the question of the mother is bolstered by a Delphic response, in which Apollo declares himself father of Asclepius by a mortal woman, Phlegyas). The distinction seems to be

13 E.g., Hellanikos *FgrH* 323a F 2, 13; Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F 13.

14 Cf. (Fowler) 2011.

15 So, for instance in many cases in Sparta in the imperial period (*IG* v.1. 529–530, and often). See now Settipani (2017) (nondum vidi).

16 *OGIS* 54.5–6. For the Seleucids' much more recent descent from Apollo see n. 35 below. The Attalids claimed to derive 'from the stock of Heracles' (Nicander p. 3a and *Fr.* 104 Gow; Hollis (2003) 3–5): Robert (1984) 14–15, n. 42, remarks that the real interest of the Attalids lay not in Zeus but in Heracles, "cet homme parvenu à l'Olympe par ses haut faits et par sa mission bienfaisante …"; he also notes that the Attalids cared less than the Ptolemies and Seleucids for 'la prétention aux ancêtres divines' (he denies that Dionysus' Pergamenian epithet Kathegemon has that sense). For the Antigonids see Edson (1934) 213–226.

17 The former: 2.5.7, 2.6.6; 2.6.7; 6.11.2; the latter 5.1.8, Eleios is son of Eurykyde and – ὅτῳ πιστά – Poseidon. In 2.31.2 he writes (in regard to the supposed rescue of Semele from Hades by Dionysus) ἐγὼ δὲ Σεμέλην μὲν οὐδὲ ἀποθανεῖν ἀρχὴν πείθομαι Διός γε οὖσαν γυναίκα. Presumably, as Bob Fowler suggests to me, he took Semele to have been a goddess.

18 Pirenne-Delforge (2008) 81: "C'est donc une expérience religieuse qui fonde sa conviction, suspendant la distance critique qu'il est pourtant parfaitement capable d'activer dans bon nombre de cas."

that the figures whose divine paternity he leaves in doubt – Peratos, Polybos, Zeuxippos, Theagenes, Eleios – are, in the main, relatively obscure mortals; but Trophonios and Asclepius are powerful gods. There is therefore clearly something divine about them; but it would be too radically opposed to tradition to suggest that they were of divine descent on both sides. This argument suggests that he might have had sympathy for the Thasian claim that Theagenes was a child of Heracles, since he acknowledges Theagenes' present power as a healer (6.11.2–9). But he does not commit himself.

2 Contemporary?

The divine unions at issue so far have almost all belonged to the mythological period. But claims or rumours about such cases continued in historical time, all relating to figures who were in different ways exceptional. The earliest source is Herodotus. He presents without comment a long speech in which the mother of the Spartan king Demaratus, implored by her son to explain the truth about his contested paternity, tells how she had been visited by the hero Astrabakos in the form of her husband and may have become pregnant by him (6. 68–69). Demaratus would thus have been conceived after the fashion of Egyptian pharaohs, according to the Egyptian royal myth already mentioned above; also after the fashion of Heracles, if the detail that Zeus took on the form of Amphitryon when he lay with Alcmena already existed at this date.[19] How these motifs came to be re-applied in a context of 6th c. Spartan politics must remain a mystery,[20] but the theme of a married woman visited by a god disguised as her husband (whereas in traditional myth gods usually lay with virgins) often re-appears subsequently. Herodotus' own attitude to it is a little puzzling. Legrand saw inconsistency between this incident and Herodotus' more regular scepticism about supposed divine unions, noted above;[21] others stress that the mother's claim is not endorsed by the author.[22] But one

19 See Fowler (2013) 263–265.

20 Burkert (2001) argued that the regal motif had been taken over for propaganda purposes by Demaratus' supporters. But the choice of, precisely, Astrabakos as putative father is puzzling on that view; Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 174.

21 Legrand (1932) 131.

22 Fowler (2010) 326; more drastically, on hearing his mother's account, "Demaratus without comment hastily makes the necessary arrangements and flees the country. Apparently, he considers her mythic, even pseudo-Heraclean, story unlikely to convince his enemies in Sparta; Herodotus, the narrator of the story, is clearly unconvinced by it.": Dewald (2012) 63. A different explanation of Demaratus' response is possible: if my father is a hero, I am not the legitimate king of Sparta.

may wonder why Herodotus permitted so long and impressive a speech to a deluded woman, if that is what he judged her. The vivid scene surely goes beyond the licence that he allows himself by the principle of λέγειν τὰ λεγόμενα (7.152.3). One might argue that (1) his objection to most stories of divine parentage is about the telescoping of human history that they entail (Hecataeus getting back to a god in 16 generations); (2) as for such unions in the present, though rejecting the routine intercourse of a god with his prophetess (1.182), he would countenance the possibility of exceptional cases. But there may be something desperate about such an argument.

However that may be, the supposed case of Demaratus' mother was not unique. According to a tradition known to Aristotle, Homer's mother was impregnated by "one of the *daimones* who dance with the Muses."[23] A cluster of stories concern the super-star athletes of the fifth centuries. The Epizephyrian Locrians claimed that their Euthymos was a son not of Asticles but of the local river Kaikinos (into which he disappeared at the end of his life).[24] The Thasians told how Theogenes was sired by a *phasma* of his father Timoxenos, who was a priest of the Thasian Heracles; clearly Heracles took the form of his priest.[25] The Rhodians say that Hermes took Diagoras' mother while she was resting beside a Hermaion.[26] In the cases of Euthymos and Diagoras, it is unclear whether the divine union followed or shortly preceded that with the athlete's mortal father; in that of Theagenes, it certainly followed, and we have the old Egyptian myth as already re-applied to Astrabakos and Heracles. In the legend of Euthymos, two further elements are present, the well-established belief in the fertilizing power of rivers, and Euthymos' own later fortunes (attested by the late fourth- century) as a river-god.[27] Hermes presumably sired Diagoras because of his well-established role as ἐναγώνιος, of competitions. Just when these legends emerged is never clear, but we know

23 [Plut.] *Vit. Hom.* 1.3, ascribing it to Book 3 of Aristotle's *Poetics*; the frag. appears as *Fr.* 76 Rose, where it is attributed to the dialogue *On Poets*. The second pseudo-Plutarchean life [West (2003) 414] mentions a view that he was born from the river Meles. In Heliod. *Aethiop.* 3. 14 the Egyptian priest Calasiris claims that Homer was begotten in Egypt by Hermes, of whom the poet's father was the prophet; this is marked in the text ('no one has ever heard it before') as an invention.

24 Paus. 6.6.4, 10, Ael. *VH* 8.18.

25 Paus. 6.11.2.

26 Pind. *Ol.* 7 inscr. a, inscr. c ad fin, where is added: ὅς πρῶτος ἀφ' Ἡρακλέος λέγεται τοιοῦτος γενέσθαι: does this mean "the first after Heracles to be conceived in such a way"?

27 See Currie (2002).

that an almost superhuman aura[28] surrounded successful athletes even in their lifetime.[29]

Two famous instances are attested in the fourth-century. The tradition about Plato goes back to his nephew Speusippos.[30] Plato's mother Amphictione was visited by (a *phasma* in the form of) Apollo; her husband Ariston was then unable to have intercourse with her and was warned by Apollo in a vision to leave her untouched until she had given birth. The restriction imposed on Ariston is a new motif; so too, if original, is the god appearing as a *phasma* of himself, rather than of the husband. Another new motif is that of the god-as-snake who visited Olympias the mother of Alexander; this too led to a cessation of intercourse between the privileged woman and the mortal husband.[31] (The 'daimon or god' as snake who begat the early Messenian hero Aristomenes is likely to be a projection back of this motif, which also probably led to the engendering of Aratus of Sicyon by Asclepius-as-snake.[32]) A spectacular new item of evidence was added to the dossier concerning Alexander's divine parentage with the publication in 2008 of a dedication from the Bahariya Oasis reading 'King Alexander to his father Ammon';[33] the editor takes it to be have been made in Alexander's own lifetime. Alexander therefore publicly endorsed the claim, in Egypt at least, if that dating is correct. But the much-debated questions of when and why and with whom the belief in a god's intervention arose remain as before.[34] Apollo's approach to Laodike, mother of Alexander's successor Seleukos, happened differently: she merely dreamt of being impregnated by the god – but on waking found that he had left a token of his presence in the form of a ring engraved with an anchor, such as appeared as a birthmark on the thigh of Seleukos and his

28 See also discussion on *melammu* in Chpt. 1, sect. 5.1 and n. 42; on royal divine aura see discussion in Chpt. 2, sect. 4; on solar halo in relation to the emperor Constantine see Chpt. 4, sect. 3 and n. 19.

29 See Parker (2011) 122.

30 D.L. 3.2. For other sources see Orig. *Cels*. 6.8 (where the word *phasma* appears) with H. Chadwick's note ad loc. Pythagoras in a previous incarnation had been a son of Hermes (D.L. 8.4); but that was in the mythological period, when such things happened more often.

31 So e.g., Plut. *Alex*. 2.6–3.4, where a possible connection with tame snakes of the Orphic-Dionysiac rites is considered.

32 The three cases are compared by Paus. 4. 14.7–8, though he notes that the Messenians do not name a specific divine father. For Aratus as son of Asclepius see Paus. 2.10.3; the snake of course was a very Asclepian reptile.

33 Bosch-Puche (2008) (= *SEG* LIX 1764); hieroglyphics on the same stone give us Alexander's full Pharaonic titulature.

34 Contrast e.g., Lane Fox (1973) 200–218; Bosworth (1988) 282–284.

successors. Seleukos is accordingly hailed as 'born of Apollo' in an anonymous paean inscribed at Erythrae, and Apollo was enshrined as ἀρχηγός of the Seleucid dynasty.[35]

Two tyrants of the earlier fourth-century, Clearchus of Heraclea and Dionysios the younger of Syracuse, had apparently described themselves occasionally as sons respectively of Zeus and Apollo; what detailed account if any they gave of the circumstances of their conception is not known.[36] Nor can we say how Hermocles might have explained his extraordinary address to Demetrios Poliorketes as 'son of Poseidon and Aphrodite.' Little is known too of the case, mentioned above, of the Achaean statesman Aratus of Sicyon in the third-century. But the extraordinary pomp with which the Sicyonians celebrated his funeral (Plut. *Arat*. 53.2–4) illustrate the reverence in which he was held, the origin therefore of the myth. There were rumours that the mothers of two eminent Romans, Scipio Africanus and Octavian, had been visited by snakes at the salient time before their birth, the latter in a temple of Apollo.[37] Much later, the old theme of the *phasma* appearing to a monarch's mother took a new twist in the account ascribed to Justinian's mother in Procopius' *Secret History* (12. 18–19). Shortly before she conceived him, something supernatural (δαιμόνιον) visited her; though invisible, it gave her the sensation that it had just had intercourse with her, and so she supposed that Justinian was not the son of any man. But here the supernatural visitant serves not to exalt but to debase the future ruler: Procopius' theme in this section is that Justinian and Theodora were in fact 'avenging demons' (δαίμονες παλαμναῖοί τινες), and the visiting god has become a demon.

This case aside, divine unions become rare in the imperial period. According to Philostratus,[38] 'the locals' said that the wonder-working philosopher

35 Just. *Epit*. 15.4.3–9 (sole source for the legend, though cf. Euph. *Fr*. 174 in *Collectanea Alexandrina*, Powell (1925) 58); *Collectanea Alexandrina*, Powell (1925) 140; *OGIS* 219, cf. (kinship) 227. 6; cf. *BÉ* 1955 no. 255 ad fin; Hollis (2003) 6. For an attempt to date the legend (a variant on that in App. *Syr*. 56, but prior to *OGIS* 219 of 278) see Hadley (1969) 151–152; and cf. works cited by Hornblower (2018) 15, n. 63. Hadley (1974) 58 argues that Seleukos himself disowned the legend, if already in existence, by naming Antioch on the Orontes for his mortal father; but this argument may underestimate the potential for creative ambiguity (Just. *Epit*. 15.4.8 in fact sees the Antioch-Daphne complex as acknowledging duel paternity).

36 Clearchus: Memnon *FGrH* 434 F 1 (1); Just. *Epit*. 16.5.8. Dionysios: Plut. *Alex. Fort*. 338B. Demetrios Poliorketes: Hermocles, ap. *Collectanea Alexandrina*, Powell (1925) 174, lines 13–14.

37 Liv. *Hist*. 26.19.7; Suet. *Aug*. 94.4.

38 *VA* 1.6. Earlier (1.4), we have heard that during the pregnancy of Apollonius' mother, a *phasma* of the 'Egyptian daimon' Proteus came to her and, asked who she would give

Apollonius of Tyana was a son of Zeus, but he described himself as son of Apollonios. Philostratus thus raises the possibility of a more than human origin of his hero, but also brings out the philosopher's own *sophrosyne* in not countenancing such talk. Very different, according to Lucian, was the attitude of the 'false prophet' Alexander of Abonuteichos, founder of the oracular and healing cult of the snake-formed 'new Asclepius' Glykon. Amid his many charlataneries, claims Lucian, Alexander professed to be a son of Podaleirios (Lucian, *Alex*. 11), and himself to have sired a daughter by Selene, who had been lured down by the beauty of his sleeping form (34); both this union and his mother's with Podaleirios were dramatised during the three-day Mysteries that he instituted in imitation of those of Eleusis (38). Outrageous and extraordinary claims if so! Several recent studies have sought, with much success, to lift the veil of Lucian's satire to reveal plausible realities of the religious culture of the second-century AD.[39] Can their approach be extended to the divine unions? For a healer such as Alexander to portray himself as a descendant, not son, of Podaleirios would be nothing remarkable. Sacred dramas in which priests enacted divine roles are known; perhaps the supposed marriage of Alexander and Selene was in fact a mystery play (of, it must be allowed, obscure relevance)[40] in which Alexander took the role of Endymion. But the dramatisation of the union of Podaleirios and Alexander's mother (if such it really was) resists such an approach. Perhaps Alexander, a charismatic and highly successful cult-founder of a type hard to parallel in the Greco-Roman world, really did claim to be son of a (minor) god.[41] But this is one of the areas where we can neither trust nor correct Lucian's account.

The cult has also been thought, even by those scholars who seek to normalise it, to have involved a different kind of divine union. Lucian says that Alexander slept with female clients in great numbers, and many claimed to have become pregnant by him, a claim their husbands supported (Lucian, *Alexander* 42). Presented thus baldly, that is an extraordinary statement: why

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birth to, answered 'me,' in anticipation, as Philostratus notes, of Apollonius' versatility and omniscience. But she is already pregnant when the god appears.

39 Robert (1980) 393–421; Lane Fox (1986) 241–250; Jones (1986) 133–148; Dignas (2013); on Alexander's mysteries also Bremmer (2017) 62–69 (with many further references in 62, n. 79). The most energetic attempt to recover for Alexander a theological position (strongly Pythagorean) is that of Victor (1997) 38–52.

40 But see the attempted explanation of Victor (1997) 47.

41 Weinreich (1969) 545–546, writes: "wir wissen ja, wie gerade in den ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderten zahlreiche Propheten auftraten, die den Anspruch machten, Gott oder Gottes Sohn zu sein," with reference to Wetter (1916). But Wetter's material (main text Orig. *Cels*. 7.9) mostly concerns a different region (Syria) and a different tradition.

would wives have proclaimed, and husbands endorsed, this violation of the marriage bed? Earlier critics simply rejected Lucian's statement, but Robert adduced an inscription from Kaisareia Troketta, "presumably of the second-century AD,"[42] recording an oracle of the Clarian Apollo. This was set up by a priest of Apollo Soter who describes himself in the genitive as Μειλήτου τοῦ Γλύκωνος Παφλαγόνος, translatable either as "Miletos son of Paphlagonian Glykon"[43] or "Miletos, son of Glykon, Paphlagonian."[44] Glykon was a very common personal name in Asia Minor, even before Glykon the snake-god became famous, but the word following it suggested to Robert, Abonouteichos being in Paphlagonia, that this 'Paphlagonian Glykon' who begat Miletos was indeed the snake-god, as represented in human form by his prophet Alexander. The argument presumably runs that Miletos' mother and the other women impregnated by Alexander recognised that physically the man with whom they slept was Alexander, but believed that metaphysically the prophet had become the god he served; Lucian tendentiously ignores this crucial distinction.[45] As a form of expression, Paphlagonian Glykon would (though otherwise unattested) be like Ephesian Artemis. The son's interest in Apollo of Claros would chime nicely with Glykon's good relations with that cult (Lucian, *Alexander* 29); perhaps[46] his putative divine father helped him to secure his priesthood in Kaisareia Troketta.

Robert's identification of Paphlagonian Glykon with the snake god has been widely approved; indeed, another 'son of Glykon,' a doctor from Tieion west of Abonuteichos along the Black Sea coast, has been tentatively identified as another son of the god.[47] Robert's position has, as noted, one strength: it can explain the pride of the women who believed their children to have been sired not, as Lucian claims, by Alexander, but rather by Glykon as Alexander. But

42 So Merkelbach and Stauber (1998) 399 (their number 04/01/01); the stone has been rediscovered, Malay and Petzl (2017) no. 12. Robert (1980) 405–408 strangely offers no comment on date in his discussion, 405–408.

43 So Robert (1980) 408; Dignas (2013) 101; Mitchell (2010) 100.

44 So Lane Fox (1986) 242; Jones (1986) 143; Jones (1998) 109.

45 If Alexander had disguised his identity and pretended to be Glykon, Lucian would surely have exploited the dishonesty. Robert (1980) 408 writes: "ce n'était pas la première fois qu'un dieu, par son prêtre, fécondait une dévote; ainsi racontait-on de Sarapis." Frustratingly and untypically, he gives no reference, and I know nothing relevant.

46 So Lane Fox (1986) 243: "divinity ran in his veins." Mitchell (2010) 100 even toys with the idea that Meiletos "had been brought up in the entourage of the temple of Glycon … and later sent out to become priest of Apollo in the small Lydian city, as part of a missionary effort."

47 By Jones (1998); suggested already by Lane Fox (1986) 720, n. 6.

it gives the idea of the prophet representing the god an application much more concrete than any that is otherwise attested: the prophet is not just, so to speak, acting the god in sacred drama, he becomes the god, his semen becomes the semen of a god. In the authoritative *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* accordingly Miletos is boldly registered as a natural son of Alexander.[48] Some scholars have substituted milder accounts of what actually happened while retaining the idea that Miletos believed himself son of a god: perhaps Glykon was credited as father because the child was conceived after a prayer to the god; perhaps Miletos' mother performed incubation and dreamed that a snake had lain with her (as happened to several barren women at Epidaurus, according to the temple record there).[49] Lucian's account of what the women in question claimed reverts to simple fabrication on this view. Many children were, it is true, conceived after prayers to gods in the ancient world, but such a scenario would normally have generated a *Glykonodotos, not a 'child of Glykon.' As for women who became pregnant after a snake-dream in an incubation sanctuary (if such there were), they may indeed have believed that the god of the sanctuary was in some sense the child's father. But we have no sign that such a child would have functioned in civic life as anything other than offspring of a mortal father.

This surely is the crux of the matter. In a public inscription of a Greek city, could a prominent citizen be identified quite simply as son of a god? Just how extraordinary this would be has perhaps not been sufficiently appreciated. Nothing resembling a parallel presents itself. Is there an alternative? Linguistically, the second rendering mentioned above, "Miletos, son of Glykon, Paphlagonian," is rather easier; it is indeed accepted by some even of those who follow Robert. Glykon would thus become one of the ordinary mortal bearers of that name, of whom there were many. A difficulty then would be to explain why a Paphlagonian was holding a leading priesthood of Kaisareia Troketta.[50] But this is a difficulty on the other view too, though special pleas can be entered in mitigation: that normal rules could be waived in favour

48 Corsten *et al.* (2010) 318 s.v. Miletos (8).

49 Milder variant: Victor (1997) 13; Dignas (2013) 101; perhaps Lane Fox (1986) 243; Jones (1986) 143 (neither's position is quite clear to me); after a dream like those at Epidaurus: Mitchell (2010) 100, n. 65, citing *IG* IV. I² 122 [Edelstein and Edelstein (1945) no. 423] nos. 39 and 42. But note no. 31, where the woman is touched by the god and "a son was born to her from Arybbas" (presumably her husband); so the god is not the father.

50 The name Miletos is not so far attested in Pontos; but Robert's argument (Robert 1980, 408–414) to show why it was appropriate for a son of Glykon (the emphasis on Ionian origins that led to the renaming of Abonouteichos as Ionopolis: cf. now Mitchell 2010) can meet this case too.

of a god's son; that his mother, at least, may have been from Kaisareia. The strongest argument in favour of Robert's view (and the rendering 'Paphlagonian Glykon') is perhaps the regional ethnic Paphlagonian: for a mortal at this date its use in lieu of a city ethnic may be hard to parallel, whereas regional cult titles for gods are quite common.[51] The question, then, whether Meiletos' supposed father was mortal or divine is finely balanced. And a lot hangs on it for our understanding of the possibilities of formal public discourse in the second-century AD.

Even if we deny the likelihood that a publicly-inscribed text would proclaim such a divine birth, individuals may still have believed that, in particular cult contexts, sexual union with a god was possible. Robert's opinion was, as we have seen, that such was indeed the belief of the women who according to Lucian claimed to have been made pregnant by Alexander: what they actually believed in was the paternity of Glykon, and this is why their husbands endorsed their claim. A scandalous supposed incident of the early first-century AD must here be retold. Though it is located in Tiberian Rome, it concerned a cult also active in Greece, and there is at this date no reason to doubt that what a Roman lady believed a Greek could believe too. The story is that a Roman knight Decius Mundus, mad with passion for a virtuous devotee of Isis, Paulina, persuaded her via a priest of the cult that the god Anoubis was enamoured of her; and with her husband's consent she went to the precinct by night for 'dinner and bed' with, as she supposed, the god, but in fact Mundus. Note that the situation is not here, as in Robert's version of the Abonouteichos cult, one where a human remains himself but also becomes the god; Mundus simply pretends that he is the god. After granting all that the supposed god desired, Paulina told her husband and friends of the 'visitation' (*epiphaneia*); they reacted with bafflement, finding the story hard to credit but knowing her good character and high standing. A few days later, Mundus met Paulina by chance and wittily boasted of his feat; she told her husband, who told the emperor, who crucified the Egyptians involved, destroyed the temple of Isis and threw the goddess' image into the Tiber; Mundus he merely banished, bizarrely, taking love as an exonerating circumstance.

The sole source for this circumstantial narrative is Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.65–80), for whom it forms one in a carefully designed chain of

51 Parker (2017) 98–100. Fraser (2009) sometimes speaks (e.g., 31, n. 41, 78) as if regional and city ethnics were interchangeable, but much the commonest bearers of regional ethnics are mercenaries. The examples I have noted among non-mercenaries are perhaps all Hellenistic (*I. Iasos* 197.6, *SEG* XLI 1037.1; *SEG* XLV 1607. 12 and 18); I am not clear how likely is such a usage in the 2nd c. AD.

stories about shady religious operators; it is preceded by a (contested) passage about Christ, followed by one about a wicked Jew whose activities led the Jews to be expelled from Rome.[52] Both Tacitus and Suetonius mention the expulsion of both Egyptians and Jews from Rome in 19 AD,[53] but on grounds of distasteful superstition, not scandal. The novellistic details in Josephus' account cause some to reject it; but some sober historians are less sceptical.[54] The truth escapes us; the most that can be said is that Josephus was able to tell the story, if with a particular agenda, and hope to be believed. But even if we believe it, we can note that, according to Josephus, Paulina's claim to have been favoured by the god was a wonder to her intimates; and there is no reason to suppose that she had ever envisaged such a possibility before she was worked upon by a lying priest. The incident is not evidence for a shared cultural belief that divine unions were a fact of life.

3 The Problem of Belief

In the study of ancient religion, we are often exhorted nowadays to turn aside from the study of behaviour and address instead questions of belief. What then can we conclude about belief in this area? An incident in Menander's *Samia* provides a starting point (588–608). An unmarried girl is pregnant, and Demeas attempts to argue that the seducer was not his own adopted son but Zeus. The suggestion is dismissed as absurd by the girl's father Nikeratos. John Campbell, reporting on his work among the migrant shepherds the Sarakatsani of northern Greece in 1954–1955, similarly tells of an unmarried girl who "claimed that she had been impregnated by divine, not human, means, but little attention was paid to this suggestion"[55] (admittedly a still harder case to argue in a Christian than a polytheist community). Commenting on the Menander passage, Sandbach notes that it contains manifestly comic elements, but goes on 'the idea that a god might beget a human child

52 See Gasparini (2017).

53 Tac. *Ann*. 2.85.5, Suet. *Tib*. 36.

54 Sceptics: e.g., Malaise (1972) 88, 391; Heyob (1975) 117–119; Gasparini (2018) (with convincing critique of a theory that regular cultic sacred unions underlie it). Accepters: e.g., Beard, North and Price (1998) 230–231. Novellistic elements: cf. e.g., the story of Olympias' seduction by Nectanebo, posing as Ammon, in Ps. Callisth. *Vit. Alex*. 1. 4–7. For the same motif in later literature (Boccaccio and others) see Weinreich (1911) (non vidi); Petridou (2015) 247.

55 Campbell (1964) 110.

was not as incredible to the fourth-century Athenian as to the twentieth-century Englishman … For many Greeks mythological stories were records of fact or at least of what might have happened … The stories that made Alexander the Great the son of Zeus were put about in his lifetime, and even if their originators did not believe them, they expected them to be widely believed.' One may wonder, if so, why the context is so humorous, and why Nikeratos is so unconvinced. Such things did not happen within the normality of life in 4th c. Athens. Nor is there any reason to think that an eighth-century Greek, a Greek at any period indeed, would have found them credible within the contemporary world.

Tragedy in general follows the mythological tradition in taking divine-mortal unions for granted, but a doubt is raised in Euripides' *Ion*. Creusa comes to Delphi to consult the oracle about her own case, pretending it to be a friend's. The young and idealistic Ion asks her her business:

> Creusa: One of my friends says that she had intercourse with Phoebus.
> Ion: A woman with Phoebus? Don't say so, stranger.
> Creusa: And she bore a child to the god, without the father knowing.
> Ion: It's not so. She is ashamed to admit wrongdoing by a mortal. (338–341)

Gradually, however, he is convinced, and left to himself he admonishes (νουθετεῖν) Phoebus:

> Does he wed maids by force and desert them? Does he sire children secretly and abandon them to die? (436–439)

According to the plot of the play, it is true that Phoebus has slept with Creusa, though untrue that he has abandoned the child (who is in fact Ion himself). What we see here is the characteristic Euripidean technique of selectively treating a mythological datum as if it were a moment of contemporary reality. Ion begins in contemporary mode, completely sceptical, but then yields to the facts of the plot: this drifting in and out of the contemporary is typical of Euripides.

A much later text (2nd/3rd c. AD?) is also relevant. Number 10 of the spurious *Epistles* of Aeschines is a cuckoo in the nest; unlike the rest of those *Epistles*, it makes no attempt to slot itself within the known biography of the orator Aeschines, with whom it has no connection. It has rightly been seen as a risqué sketch designed to amuse, possibly an example of the lost 'Milesian tales' or something like them; there is no telling when in time it professes to

be set, but this does not matter as all the details are likely to be made up.[56] The anonymous letter-writer complains about the outrageous behaviour of his travelling companion Kimon, who on a trip to Ilion took advantage of a ritual whereby the local girls on the verge of marriage enter the river Scamander and pray to it. Disguised in reeds to resemble the river, he emerged from a thicket and responded to one girl's ritual appeal to Scamander to 'take my virginity' with an 'I gladly accept.' Reproached later by the author with the extreme danger his reckless behaviour (now found out) has brought their party into, Kimon claims that a similar trick in regard to the river Maiander had caused the father of the athlete Attalos to believe that his son was a child of the river, while a cuckolded musician in Epidamnus had been deceived into accepting Heracles as father of his wife's illegitimate child. Kimon's self-defence is broken off when angry locals arrive, intent on violence; the travellers flee, and the letter ends. Those who believe in the possibility of divine unions in the contemporary world are gullible fools, the letter assumes. But does it also assume that such gullible fools existed? Possibly stories about supposed cases circulated in antiquity, 'urban myths' as we call them today.[57] But the broad picaresque-comic manner of the *Letter* does not force us to suppose even that.

A god, then, would not visit the girl next door (except perhaps in dreams),[58] in Greece any more than in modern Britain. Such encounters had happened in the mythological period, according to myths which never lost their central cultural relevance. The familiar problem of belief in myths presents itself here. Perhaps things were different then;[59] perhaps the genealogies contained in the myths were true, if one lopped off the divine ancestor; perhaps none of it was literally true. To know the precise truth on such points was not possible, and to most people did not matter very much. We noted above Pausanias' explicit statement of belief in a union of the mythological period: Trophonius' present power proves that he is after all a son of Apollo. But such a statement is a rarity. Then there were whispers, rumours, stories about truly exceptional individuals, athletes and monarchs above all. And that is exactly what they were, whispers, rumours, stories, though it might occasionally be in the interest

56 On all this see Schwegler (1913) 16–19, 76, 81. Corsten (2010) 88 s.v. Attalos (88) rightly marks the athlete Attalos as (fict.?).

57 Cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.281–282 (Juno is speaking): 'many have entered chaste bedrooms pretending to be gods' (*multi/nomine divorum thalamos iniere pudicos*).

58 On dreams of intercourse with gods (for either sex) see Artem. *Onirocr.* 1.80 p. 97.14–98.3 Pack (and the case-study at 5. 87 p. 323. 10–16 Pack); in Posidippus 33 in Austin and Bastianini (2002), Aristoxeinos dreams of wedding Athena.

59 Tosetti (2008) argues that such unions belong to, and in part define, mythical time; he does not consider later cases.

of individuals or groups to claim them to be more than that: Alexander of Macedon made a dedication to his father Ammon, if the newly discovered text really dates to his lifetime; Alexander of Abonouteichos claimed a divine father and a divine bride, if we believe Lucian. Anything amid all this that one can count as firm and widely shared belief is hard to find. The most remarkable testimony to a publicly endorsed claim by an individual ordinary enough not to be able (as was Alexander of Macedon) simply to impose it lies in "Miletos son of Paphlagonian Glykon," if that is indeed the correct translation and Paphlagonian Glykon is indeed the oracular god. That word 'if' again! Those who stress the difficulty of discussing ancient religion in terms of beliefs do not, or should not, subscribe to what has been called the 'empty heads fallacy,' the idea that Greeks and Romans held no opinions about the gods they worshipped. The point is that those beliefs were not doctrines, were often tentative and context-determined, were not shepherded and kept in order by authority, and so are always liable to slip away from the enquirer like water through cupped hands.[60]

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PART 3

Religion, Philosophy and Ritual

∴

3a. Orphic Heroization and Divinization Rituals; Platonic Traditions and Mystic Rituals
3b. Neoplatonic Theurgic Unions
3c. Stoic Theology and the Christian Thinkers

CHAPTER 7

Genos Olbion, Genos Ouranion: Divine Ancestry in the Orphic Gold Tablets

Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui

1 Bricolage and Systems

"If you are asked who is your father, you will answer: "my father is the sun and my mother is the moon." The apparently obvious Hermetic resonances of this utterance are misleading.[1] These words do not belong to an esoteric sect with purported roots in an ancient revelation: they are part of the initiatory rites of entrance in the *Santa*, a branch of the *'Ndrangheta* (in this day the most powerful criminal organization in Europe) authorized to establish links with freemasonry. The Italian police registered the oaths given by some new members in Milan in 2014. The *santisti* express their total allegiance to the group, not only through an oath by "Garibaldi, Mazzini and Lamarmora" and statements of loyalty to death like "either you poison yourselves or you take this firearm," but also through this extraordinary statement of genealogy.[2]

As experts in cocaine distribution and money laundering, the new *uomini di onore* probably care little about the literality of the words they are uttering. Whatever they think and feel when they express their new filiation, it is clearly not rooted in complex metaphysics, but in the idea that they have gained a new identity as members of a group that overcomes any previous allegiance. For those who instruct them and made up this bewildering oath, the sun and the moon are images with a flair of ancient Hermetic tradition typical of masonic-ish groups. Whoever made up this oath wanted to underline the seriousness, esoteric elitism, and vague mysticism surrounding the

1 The fourth sentence of the medieval *Tabula Smaragdina* was (in its arch-famous Latin version) "*Pater eius est Sol, Mater eius est Luna*." Popularized mainly through engravements in alchemical books, it became widespread in several branches of modern esoteric literature.

2 English translation of the dossier from the Italian Congress about organized criminal associations in: http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/pdf/-24/audiz2/audizione/2018/02/21/ALLEGATO_01.pdf Translation of the whole registration on p. 58, n. 43. The original audio is easily reachable in internet: e.g., http://www.strill.it/citta/2014/11/ndrangheta-il-giuramento-della-santa-o-ti-spari-o-ti-avveleni-video/.

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culmination of a process of acquiring a new identity as *mafiosi*, for which he combined so different elements as figures of the Italian Risorgimento, commitments to suicide before betraying, and religious formulae.

Though the geographical coincidence is purely casual, this registration is an enlightening parallel to discuss (again) a startling genealogical statement that another group rooted in Calabria promoted 2500 years ago to identify its initiates. Several gold tablets found in tombs of the 5th–2nd centuries BCE contain an inscribed text in which a central sentence is: "I am the child of earth and starry heaven" (*OF* 474–484), and in others "I also claim to be of your blessed lineage" (*OF* 488–490).[3] Many pages in the last century and a half have been spent trying to discern what these enigmatic sentences mean, and in a volume on divine unions in the ancient Mediterranean this matter could not be absent. Indeed, in the entire panorama of early Greek religion there is not another single instance in which deification is promised for man in explicit terms such as those in the gold tablets.[4] This exceptional breaking in the afterlife of the otherwise unsurmountable frontier between human and divine has raised enormous interest in them since they began to be discovered in tombs scattered in southern Italy, Thessaly-Macedonia, and Crete, in the 19th century until our days. The instructions for the soul on how to gain from the underworld powers a blessed post-mortem destiny, the coincidence of several tantalizing formulae, and the neat relation with mystic rites for initiates,[5] are the common features that force considering all the tablets together. The general labelling and the details are, instead, very much debated: most interpretations have attempted to decipher them as expression of an elaborate "Orphic" anthropology and theology. This supposition, however, has been often challenged in favour of a diversity of explanations for different sets of tablets.[6]

At the heart of the matter, a fundamental question lies: do we have to take at face value the statements of the gold tablets, from the genealogical proclama-

3 References to the tablets follow Bernabé (2004).

4 The closest parallel is Emp. *Fr.* 112 DK, although the dative ὑμῖν makes even this statement of self-deification more doubtful. Of course, Empedocles' *Katharmoi* offers many parallels of form and content with the gold tablets: cf. Kingsley (1995); Riedweg (1995); Herrero (2013a).

5 On Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; also Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13; on Egyptian mystic union see Chpt. 3 and nn. 8, 18, 30. On theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13, sect. 1.3 and n. 18; Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, sect. 3.

6 For diverse versions of the "Orphic" interpretation, cf. the monographs of Bernabé and Jiménez (2008) and Graf and Johnston (2013). The deconstructing position is defended by Edmonds (2011) and (2013), and lastly by Scullion (2018), for whom "child of heaven and earth" is a way to say, "I come from the world of the living," just as it is said for orphans.

tions to deification statements like "You have become a god, from the man you were"? or are they just metaphors vaguely suggesting hope in a blessed afterlife? In order to clarify the question, the analogy with the oath of the *santisti* allows us to distinguish three levels in the analysis of the gold tablets.

On a first level, the users, those by whose corpse the tablets have been found, need not to have been much aware of their content. Some tablets, like the Petelia one (*OF* 476), clearly have been reused as amulets. Even in those cases where there are signs of personalization, like Cecilia Secundina in a unique Roman tablet (*OF* 492), or the changes in gender that affect the Cretan tablets in order to adequate them to a male or female defunct (*hyios*/*thygater* in *OF* 478–484, as opposed to *pais* in *OF* 474–476 for the formula "child of earth and starry heaven"), the initiates who were buried with these tablets were probably not much more aware of the dense meaning of the formulae than those who were buried with simple tablets that just have the proper name and the word *mystes*.

A second level is that of the engravers of the tablets (or those procuring such engravement). They chose hexametres, whole scenes, and ritual utterances, and produced tablets whose text is seldom identical – even those tablets with closest resemblance show some variants. These engravers presumably did have a deeper knowledge of the meaning of the lines they chose, and were responsible for the inner poetics of each tablet.[7] It is to them to whom we may attribute, for instance, the combination of lines from different scenes (supplication and ritual *symbola*) that we find in tablets like *OF* 488, quoted below.

However, there is a third level, that of the poems and ritual texts from which these engravers drew these lines, scenes, and *symbola*. They presumably had a higher inner consistence, as can be supposed of a complete poem of descent of the soul or an entire ritual of initiation. Granted, this third stage is just an ideal reconstruction: to begin with, such poems and rituals are themselves product of synthesis (bricolage in Graf and Johnston's terms) from previous elements, and they were probably decomposed in different forms before the engravers had access to them. Following the aforementioned analogy, the *Tabula Smaragdina*, the medieval Hermetic text where the filiation from sun and moon is found, drew itself from different alchemical sources, and each of its lines had a later independent tradition of its own, from some branch of which the masonic initiators took this expression. However, that does not prevent taking the *Tabula* as a self-contained text with an aspiration of completeness. The same completeness can be presupposed of the hexametrical poems

7 On "telestic poetics" cf. Obbink (2011). See Faraone now also (2021) 83–151.

describing the descent of the soul and the meetings with guardians and/or Persephone, from which the tablets took verses and scenes, and also of the initiation rites which are reflected in mystic *symbola*. They are themselves products of bricolage but with an aspiration of inner consistence.

In fact, each act of bricolage produces a system of its own, but a different degree of consistence is required for each level depending on its function. The user will just require to be given the tranquility upon death that he will be going to a better place, the engraver will choose the fundamental instructions to fill a small tablet, and the poet and the ritual initiator will have to produce a self-consistent composition which can be helpful to address those requirements in different moments for different people. This threefold level is fundamental to understand the startling variety of tablets within a common pattern, since along undeniable similarities, they present many divergences. Apart from the short ones with just one sentence and the name of the *mystes*, there are three main types: those resembling the Hipponion tablet (*OF* 474–484), mainly from South Italy and Crete, in which the initiate receives instructions to reach blessedness; those from Thurii (*OF* 487–491), in which the initiate supplicates to Persephone that she allows him to go into the abode of the pure; and two from Pelinna (*OF* 485–486), in which the initiate is greeted as reborn. However, this geographical classification does not correspond exactly with the contents, for there are several internal and external overlaps between them.

In a recent paper (Herrero 2015a) I have proposed establishing two poles of horizontal and vertical imagery, a distinction that seems to me useful to classify the different sorts of backgrounds from which the tablets take their lines and utterances. In the lines that stem from the poetic narration of the descent into the Underworld the image of the path prevails over any other: initiates must get in the right road to join the other initiates; in the ritual utterances expressed in the aorist typical of *symbola*, however, vertical imagery dominates: flying, diving, falling, and leaping express sudden transformation. One could be tempted to equate horizontal progress of the hexametric poems with heroization and ritual verticality with deification, but the evidence resists this conclusion. In fact, the only two explicit proclamations of deification in two Thurian tablets, combine both types of imagery and format (horizontal expressions underlined, vertical ones in italics), and have parallels with tablets from three different series – i.e., those which instruct the soul on what route should be taken and what should be said to the guardians, those which recreate the supplication to Persephone, and those which greet the initiate with expressions of welcome:

OF 487 (Thurii, 4th century BCE)
Ἀλλ' ὁπόταν ψυχὴ προλίπηι φάος ἀελίοιο,
δεξιὸν †Ε.ΘΙΑΣ† δ' ἐξιέναι πεφυλαγμένον εὖ μάλα πάντα·
χαῖρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα τὸ δ' οὔπω πρόσθ' ἐπεπόνθεις·
θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου· *ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες*.
χαῖρε χαῖρε· δεξιὰν ὁδοιπόρει
λειμῶνάς θ' ἱεροὺς καὶ ἄλσεα Φερσεφονείας.

But when the soul leaves the light of the sun,
go straight to the right, having kept watch on all things very well.
Hail, you having experienced the experience you had not
experienced before.
A god you have become from a man. *A kid you fell into milk*.
Hail, hail; *make your way to the right*,
the sacred meadows and groves of Phersephoneia (Transl. Edmonds 2011, 20).

OF 488 (Thurii, 4th century BCE)
Ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά, χθονίων βασίλεια,
Εὐκλῆς Εὐβουλεύς τε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι·
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν.
ἀλλά με Μοῖρ' ἐδάμασσε καὶ ἀστεροβλῆτα κεραυνῶι.
κύκλου δ' *ἐξέπταν* βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο,
ἱμερτοῦ δ' *ἐπέβαν* στεφάνου ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι,
δεσποίνας δ'ὑπὸ κόλπον *ἔδυν* χθονίας βασιλείας·
ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ' ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο.
ἔριφος ἐς γάλ' *ἔπετον*.

Pure *I come* from the pure, Queen of those below the earth,
and Eukles and Eubouleus and the other immortal gods;
For I also claim that I am of your blessed race.
But Fate mastered me and the thunderer, striking with his lightning.
I flew out of the circle of wearying heavy grief;
I came on with swift feet to the desired crown;
I passed beneath the bosom of the Mistress, Queen of the Underworld,
"Happy and most blessed one, a god you shall be instead of a mortal."
A kid I fell into milk. (Transl. Edmonds 2011, 16)

The mixture of ritual and poetic statements from clearly different backgrounds (supplication scenes, ritual *symbola*, *makarismoi*) suggests that the

tablets as such are not more precise than the oath of the *santisti*. They have clearly functional interests, and their small size makes it improbable that they were composed as anything more than *ad hoc* vademecums and used as much more than amulets. The first tablet insists on going to the right. The second one accumulates several ritual utterances. None of this seems enough to justify *per se* the momentous post-mortem deification that is enounced. However, the utterances in these tablets spring from elaborated poetic and ritual complexes in which a consistent anthropology was developed that culminated in the union with the divine. In what follows, I will try to explore the element that seems to underpin this union in most tablets, i.e. the notion of a divine lineage of the soul.

2 The Prevalence of the Divine Lineage

One of the clearest common features that unites the horizontal and vertical tablets is precisely the way of conceiving the linkage between the human and the divine. It is a matter of common genealogy: the human souls claim being from divine race. A common lineage for gods and men, *syggeneia*, is indeed not a strange notion in Greece or in neighboring cultures. This can be taken literally or metaphorically and be fruitfully exploited in different ways: when Homer calls Zeus "father of gods and men" he underlines his patriarchal rule over the whole cosmos, rather than implying actual fatherhood, but the general image of a common origin can be easily understood by his audience. Likewise, Hesiod tells the myth of the five races in order to show Perses how "men and immortal gods come from the same place" (ὡς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοί τ' ἄνθρωποι) but carefully underlines that each human *genos* was fabricated by the gods.[8] Instead, the lines in tablets take the idea of a common ancestry literally and deepen in this conception in an incisive way. The speaker in the Hipponion-like tablets tell the guardians that they "already know themselves," and hence expect them to say: "I am a child of earth and starry heaven" (*OF* 474–484). And the Petelia tablet adds, "but my lineage is heavenly" (*OF*: 476: αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον). The enigmatic "my name is Asterios" in the Pharsalos tablet (*OF* 477: Ἀστέριος ὄνομα), exactly in the same position, is most probably equivalent, as an indication that the heavenly part of this genealogy prevails.

Likewise, in the Thurii tablets the soul claims to be of divine lineage (καὶ γὰρ ἐγῶ ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν). This *euchomai* formula has clear epic

8 Hes. *Op*. 108. On *syggeneia* in Greek literature from Homer to the Christian Fathers cf. Places (1964).

resonances that condense the meanings of claiming of one's own right as a suppliant, uttering emphatically one's divine lineage, and praying to the gods who are the addressees of the invocation.[9] But immediately after that resounding statement, in two tablets the soul says: "And I have paid the penalty for unjust deeds." And yet in the other tablet just quoted above: "But Fate mastered me and the thunderer, striking with his lightning." In the three cases, there is a clear contraposition with the preceding line, marked not only through the connectors δέ and ἀλλά, but above all through the negative connotations of punishment for injustice and submission to Fate, i.e. death. Both contrapose the *genos olbion* of the gods to the disgrace that has kept the soul out from joining earlier her divine lineage, in a state of impurity which only now has been regained. Disgrace is precisely the opposite to *olbion*, the aspect of the divine life that is most insistently emphasized in these tablets.[10] To choose this uncommon phrase is consistent with welcoming the soul as "*olbie kai makariste*" later in one of them (*OF* 488). The blessedness of the gods is the opposite from the disgraces that belong to the mortals. The five races of men in Hesiod differ precisely in their diminishing degree of blessedness and increasing degree of injustice.

Therefore, anthropology of the gold tablets is clearly based on a dualistic opposition between a human, earthly, and painful nature and a heavenly, happy, and divine nature. For the initiate, the human part dies and the divine part prevails. Their link is envisaged in terms of ancestry. On a Cretan inscription of the second-century BCE from a temple of the Great Mother, whose affinity with the tablets has been recognized long ago, the same idea is explicitly formulated in terms of *genos*:[11]

> θαῦμα μέγ' ἀνθρώποις πάντων Μάτηρ προδίκνυτι·
> τοῖς ὁσίοις κίνχρητι καὶ οἱ γονεὰν ὑπέχονται·
> τοῖς δὲ παρεσβαίνονσι θιῶν γένος ἀντία πράτ<τ>ει.
> πάντες δ' εὐσεβίες τε καὶ εὔγλωθιοι πάριθ' ἁγνοὶ

9 See a detailed analysis in Herrero (2011) built on the studies of Perpillou (1972) and Muellner (1974) on the meanings of the verb *euchomai*.

10 Of the main features of the divine life, each poet may choose whichever is more appropriate: in Hesiod's description of the gold race the gods are called *athanatoi* (*Op.* 110) because this is the only difference between gods and gold men. A contrario, *ageraos* is markedly absent from the formula in *Hom. Hymn. Aphr.* 240 (Titonus' tale). As the formula to choose happiness, *genos makarôn* is more common. *Genos olbion* only appears in the oracle that answered Laius' praying for a "wealthy lineage" (*Anth. Pal.* 14.76).

11 The links of the inscription (*ICret* 1.23.3, *SEG* 50.933 bis) with Orphic material was recognized long ago, and is edited by Bernabé as *OF* 568B. Among later studies on the inscription, cf. Tzifopoulos (2010) and Petrovic and Petrovic (2016).

ἔνθεον ἐς Μεγάλας Ματρὸς ναόν, ἔνθεα δ᾽ ἔργα
γνωσῇ[θ]᾽ ἀθανάτας ἄξια τῶδε ναῷ.

The Mother of all shows a great wonder to men
she pours wine to the blessed and they maintain their lineage
but to those who deviate from the lineage of the gods she does
the opposite.
All pious and well-tongued come pure
to the divine temple of the Great Mother, and there you will know
divine works worth of the immortal of this temple. (My transl.)

The way to be accepted by the Mother is to declare the divine lineage, not to deviate from it. This victory of the divine side over the human one seems to be achieved through words and deeds that grant purity and, therefore, union with the divine lineage. Possibly the words and deeds of many initiates buried with many gold tablets did not differ much from those who approached the Cretan temple of the Mother, but there is a clear difference. The tablets speak of the disgrace that made them deviate from the *genos olbion* in the past, as something that has already happened, while the inscription warns against future impure actions.

Now, what the disgrace is that affected the soul, for which it paid the penalty, was subdued to Fate and struck by Zeus' lightning, is a question over which scholars have dealt for one century and a half. Most of them think it refers to the Orphic myth of the Titans, who killed Dionysus and were struck by Zeus lightning, so that humans, as their descendants, must pay the penalty for that crime that stained the whole human race keeping it away from their divine origin. Some other scholars, notably Radcliffe Edmonds, point out that the myth is only fully attested in late antiquity and suppose that the unjust deeds for which the souls must atone are their own. The combined evidence of other allusions to the Zagreus myth in other ancient texts clearly makes the first theory more plausible if we have to reconstruct a systematic theory in an original poem in which this supplication scene of the soul before Persephone was depicted.[12] However, it is worth noticing the allusive and generalizing tone of the lines in the tablets, which must have also been ambiguous in this previous poem. Even if the poet had the myth of the Titans in mind, his formulation was general enough as to make it a possible "original crime" that kept man away from his divine lineage, but not the only possible explanation. An ancient

12 See n. 3 above.

user had – as a modern reader like Edmonds – enough interpretative space to fill this *erga ou dikaia* with other possible meanings.

This openness is by no means strange. In Hesiod's *Works and Days* the very coexistence of two different accounts of the origin of man (Pandora and the myth of the Five Races) shows that the actual state of disgrace for humankind could be thought to have several possible explanations. In Empedocles *Fr.* 115 DK, the fall of the *daimon* that causes his exile from the divine realm is due to some mysterious broken oath, and perhaps some crime, which notwithstanding the famous textual uncertainty of the key lines, was by no means explicit, but was meant to be ambiguous. The faults of the ancestors expiated by descendants was a common conceptual tool in Greek religious culture that could be reshaped by each poet and by each reader, and such openness is a natural way of playing with its many possibilities.[13] Centuries later, the Gnostic cosmogonies will also purposefully leave in ambiguous indetermination what the sin of Sophia may have been. It will be only with Christianity when a single explanation, the first chapter of Genesis, takes canonicity as the single valid history of the original Fall. But as it is more often said than actually realized, we should not project the Christian taste for dogmatization into earlier stages of Greek religion.

This allusiveness and openness of the formulation in the Thurian tablets that speak about the causes of the deviation from the divine lineage, also allows to reinterpret Edmonds' contraposition between a unified later version of the Zagreus myth in Olympiodorus' account and a multiplicity of elements that would have been dispersed in earlier allusions, i.e. Titanic ancestry, soul vs. body, etc. The existence of a unified version of the Zagreus myth in archaic times may precisely have been an attempt by one poet (a *bricoleur* poet and theologian) to give a possible answer to that mysterious "fall" that poets speculated with. But, on the other hand, the existence of a full version of that myth does not entail that all mentions to any of the elements that composed it (Titanic ancestry, etc.) were forcefully bound by this tale. The fact that a mention in a *threnos* by Pindar (*Fr.* 133 S-M) is precisely one of the clearest witnesses of the existence of the myth should warn us, if we recall the freedom with which Pindar (like Hesiod) uses myth, as a tool to think with, and not a Credo.[14]

Whether the "unjust deeds," therefore, were Dionysus' killing or some other indeterminate wrongdoing should not be the unsurmountable obstacle that

13 Gagné (2013) 460–463 on the tablets and Empedocles.

14 Cf. the enlightening analysis of Johnston (2015) on the function of myth in ancient Greece.

sometimes seems to hinder any possible progress on the interpretation of the tablets. Orphic or non-Orphic, just as reincarnation in Empedocles' *Katharmoi* may be reasonably understood in spite of our ignorance of the *daimon's* deed in *Fr.* 115 DK, the tablets allow a quite straightforward explanation of how the heavenly and blessed lineage prevails.

In effect, the *autar* in the Pharsalos tablet that emphasizes the heavenly element and at the same time degrades the earthly one offers a significant parallel to some epic scenes in which a superior lineage is the key to survival or victory: in the *Iliad*, Aeneas boasts of his divine lineage that saves his life against Achilles, and Achilles in turn claims his descent from Zeus against Asteropaeus' origin from a river-god: and both contrast their superior lineage that will grant them prevailing with a strong αὐτὰρ ἐγώ.[15] Just as in the duels of the epic heroes, in the tablets there is also a competition of lineages: the divine lineage in men must prevail over the human one. If the first, heavenly one stems from the gods, the second, earthly one, results from those who were punished for their unjust deeds. While the human *genos* keeps men trapped in the "painful cycle of deep grief" (*OF* 488: κύκλου βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο) to which they were condemned, the divine *genos* will allow them to dwell in eternal bliss.[16]

What these parallels with the heroic duels in the *Iliad* show is that the theological elaboration expressed in the lines in the tablets stems from subtle reformulations of traditional notions, and develops new conceptions directly out of the ancient stock of ideas. The ancestral fault which haunts the epic and tragic heroes turns into the crime of the cosmic ancestors, for which penalty is paid by their "innocent" offspring. Even if we include reincarnation into this scheme (taking the *kyklos* in *OF* 488 as the cycle of transmigration), it still keeps the form of traditional poetry: the epic heroes show that the life of the individual matters less in itself, than as a necessary piece to keep the *genos* alive and glorious through the generations. Poseidon's preoccupation about Aeneas' *genos* in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 20.300–309) is a famous example. Likewise, the successful comparison made by Glaucos (*Il.* 6.146–149) about the ephemeral

15 Hom. *Il.* 20.208, 21.187. For an extensive comparison of these passages, as well as Glaucos' and Diomedes' verbal duel in Hom. *Il.* 6, cf. Herrero (2011).

16 In one of the frequent verbal links between different tablets and Orphic fragments, the "heavy grief" recalls, on the one hand, Persephone's *penthos* in Pindar's *Fr.* 133 S-M, and on the other, *barys* recalls the variant reading by Pugliese Caratelli in the Hipponion Tablet (*OF* 474 line 10), ὑὸς Βαρέας, the "son of the heavy one," Bareia being a synonym of Earth: Bernabé and Jiménez, and Graf and Johnston, however, edit Γῆς παῖς, as in other tablets. The Earth is probably taken as mother of the Titans, from whom the un-heavenly *genos* (i.e., the human part, the body) springs in the Orphic anthropogony of the Zagreus myth.

human *genea* – just before telling the long history of his *genos*, where he is just one step more – can be interpreted in the same way. The function of the individual lives in different bodies of the transmigrating soul is only to take the soul to a better position and lead it to the next life. None of the reincarnations really matters individually, because it is the *genos ouranion* which unites them all and which, in the last resort, holds the real identity and effectively survives. Just as Empedoclean reincarnation ends up in the hope of dining with the gods (*Fr.* 146–147 DK), in the tablets the heavenly *genos* will prevail.

3 The Soul and the Gods in the Tablets

Now contrary to the duels in the *Iliad*, this prevalence of the divine lineage over the superior, heavenly, divine lineage over the inferior, earthly one, is not envisaged in agonistic terms. The tablets offer two main possibilities: either a recognition achieved through humble supplication and uttering of the right words (as in the Hipponion-like and Thurii tablets), or as a sudden rebirth (as in the two Pelinna tablets). As we have seen, the horizontal expressions seem to have more affinity with the former, while the vertical are more easily associated to the latter. The first ones depict the experience in familiar terms, echoing Homeric type scenes like the topographical instructions to follow an itinerary, or a supplication of the newcomer to the sovereign of a foreign land.[17] In both cases, the familiarity with epic scenes would facilitate envisaging the experience of dwelling with the gods as the culmination of a processual progress. Instead, the vertical expressions, with improbable *symbola* like "kid I fell into the milk" seem to depict an "experience that you have never experienced before" (*OF* 487). A new birth simultaneous with death, as the first line of the Pelinna tablets proclaims (485–486: νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε), is clearly an unprecedented experience, one which precisely aims at conveying such strangeness and uniqueness, as the only adequate means to frame a transformation into deity. Echoes of the contemporary discussions around the preference of *mathein* against *pathein* and viceversa, or around the possibility of a crucial day (*emar tode*) that changes

17 The clearest parallels are in the *Odyssey*: on the affinities between the Hipponion tablet and Athena's and Nausicaa's' instruction to Odysseus on how to arrive to Arete's palace in Scheria in Hom. *Od.* 6, cf. Martin (2007). For a comparison between Odyssean supplication scenes and the Thurii tablets, cf. Herrero (2013a). In general, the theme of the cosmic exile like Empedocles had already in classical times a poetic model in Odysseus; cf. Herrero (2017).

the signification of an entire life, resound in the pregnant formulations of those tablets.[18]

Can we think that these subtle differences between a gradual model of heroization and a sudden deification were apparent to the users of the tablets? This is very improbable. Not only the preserved archaeological contexts suggest reutilization as amulets, and the literary sources often criticize mechanical ritualism. Also, we have seen the two tablets from Thurii that explicitly promise deification combine formulae from different models and mix walking scenes with ritual *symbola* expressing sudden transformation. No matter whether this combination was at some point performed in a ritual or was a mere product of a superficial line-selection of the inscriber, it is clear that the ultimate users of the tablets did not care much about these distinctions.

The same cannot be supposed, however, about the composers of the hexametric lines, which recycled and gave dense religious meaning to epic formulas like ἄματι τῶιδε or εὔχομαι εἶναι, and to scenes like the supplication of the newcomer. Their pregnant formulations and their careful echoing of epic genealogical terminology show that they were fully conscious of the importance of bridging the gap between the human and the divine. Just as Hesiod in the *Works and Days*, the poets of the descent of the soul to Hades were exploring the possibilities of the *genos* imagery in order to make the distance between god and man understandable and surmountable. The Cretan inscription on the temple of the Mother and the success of the idea of *syggeneia* in post-classical Greece show that they were treading an increasingly popular road in order to drive home their eschatological proposal.

Two further conclusions may be drawn from this survey, about the subject of the tales of descent and about its destiny. It is obvious that the tablets were not behind the great accounts of the nature and destiny of the human soul that we find in the portraits of the Underworld in Plato or Vergil. But Plato and Vergil were clearly inspired by sources (doubtless Orphic eschatological poems among them) which dwelt on the blessings and punishments that awaited human beings after death.[19] It is also from this sort of poems (not necessarily the same) from which the hexametres in the tablets derive. In

18 I have dwelt on the traditional debates that seem to be hinted at in both expressions in two papers: Herrero (2013b) for the formula ἄματι τῶιδε, and Herrero (2018) for *pathein vs. mathein*. In a group of gold Palestinian tablets of Imperial times that seem akin to the Orphic ones – cf. Graf and Johnston (2013) append. I – the initiate (or rather the soul, for a repeated name is *Eugene*, well-born) is addressed with the epic and mystic exhortation *tharsei*! see Herrero (2016).

19 On Plato's Orphic transposition, cf. Bernabé (2015). For Vergil's sources in *Aeneid* 6, and the affinities of Aeneas' descent with the catabatic experience in ritual and literature; cf. Herrero (2015b).

these poems, as we have seen, the issue of *syggeneia* was seriously and consistently dealt with. It is reasonable to think that the singular subject of such *syggeneia* was not left imprecisely as a defunct deprived of any clear status, but that it was addressed explicitly to the soul – who is naturally the subject in Homeric scenes in Hades, in Plato's recreated myths, and in all later eschatological accounts. The feminine subject of the tablets may have been adapted sometimes to a female or male defunct marking explicitly her or his gender. But the default subject, in tablets such as those from Thurii which start with *erchomai ek katharon kathara*, is feminine, because it is the human psyche. It is an old explanation, and it is still the best way to explain the text of the tablets with this consistent female gender.[20] However, the fact that in an original poem the female protagonist was the soul does not mean that in all tablets the engraver thought of the subject as the soul – hence the gender changes in some tablets to adequate it to the individual deceased.

However, if the psyche clearly seems to be the subject of the story in the tablets, her destiny is much more obscurely expressed. In some tablets the promise is to become a hero, in others to become a god, in others just to be one of the blessed (*euageôn*). The same imprecision is found in the addressees. The second line in the three Thurii tablets that present the supplication scene leave the quantity of gods indeterminate (*OF* 488–490): *kai athanatoi daimones alloi; kai theoi kai daimones alloi; kai theoi hosoi daimones alloi*. In all these formulations the initiate seems to assume a great variety of deities in Hades – which is consistent not only with the subordinate *phylakes* who serve the king of the Hipponion tablet (*OF* 474), but also with the many sorts of beings that dwell in Hades in the imaginations of the Underworld from Plato to Plutarch and Vergil; and also with the different blessed destinies of the three blessed races of men in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, gold, silver, and heroes, who respectively ended up as *daimones phylakes, daimones hypochthonioi*, and dwellers of the Isles of the Blessed. These examples show that there was a great freedom in envisaging modes of upgrading of the soul in a blessed afterlife, and that when the soul was promised to be heroic or divine, it was left to imagination what this may have precisely meant.[21] It was, after all, an

20 Contra Scullion (2018), who is forced to explain the first line in *OF* 487 ("but when the *psyche* leaves the light of the sun") as a mere literary formula, and the *katerchomenai psychai* in *OF* 474 as a different entity from the deceased initiate, which seems implausible. Even in later Palestinian tablets the soul may be the subject (see n. 17 above).

21 Even in a much more theologically restrictive context, i.e. Hellenistic Judaism, blessed afterlife could be depicted as "they become gods" (Ps-Phoc. line 104, ὀπίσω δὲ θεοὶ τελέθονται; on the debates surrounding this line, cf. Horst (1974) and Wilson (2005) *ad loc*.

"experience never felt before," and if in religions with strict dogma eschatology is precisely the realm which offers most space for speculation, this is even more the case in Greek religious poetry, where conceptual clusters like divine lineage, ancestral fault, or the extension of the divine world were endlessly subject to reconfiguration by each poet.

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CHAPTER 8

Union with the Divine in Greece and India: Mysteries and Monetisation

Richard Seaford

1 Introduction

The theme of this chapter is the union – in mystic initiation and in philosophy – of the subject (soul or mind) with a universal entity that may be called divine, and that may be universal in the extreme sense that it is all that exists.

There are, as this volume makes clear, various kinds of union with the divine. The most complete union produces a single homogeneous entity, as in Plotinus: the desire of the soul (ψυχή) "to be united with god" (6.9.9) produces an internal process that culminates in a "vision hard to put into words":

> This is the intention of the command in the mysteries here (τῶν μυστήριων τῶνδε) not to disclose to the uninitiated, since that (ἐκεῖνο) is not disclosable, it forbids disclosing the divine (θεῖον) to another who has not had the good fortune to see. Since the person seeing was one thing (ἕν) with what was seen (for it was not seen but united with him) … he was himself ἕν, having no distinction in relation to himself or to other things. (Plot. *Enn*. VI.9.11)

This extreme form of union, called by Proclus "the mystic unification to the divine,"[1] is not to be found in the earliest Greek philosophy, neither in the Presocratics nor in Plotinus' master, Plato. They do however propound ideas of a close relation between the subject and a universal entity, which I will investigate, focusing on Parmenides and Plato as precursors of the closer relation found in Neoplatonism. I will also indicate the possibility of a historical explanation of this particular development, as well as of a similar development in India. Needless to say, reasons of space require the chapter to be extremely selective.

I must right from the beginning emphasise that I do not exclude the possibility that our philosophical texts have been influenced by a powerful 'mystic'

1 Procl. *in R*. I.81.10: ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον μυστικὴ ἕνωσις.

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experience of the transcendent unity of all things. Plotinus certainly had that experience, and so too perhaps did Parmenides and Plato. My concern is with the underlying conceptual development that promotes monism and – were that (ineffable) 'mystic' experience to occur – would allow and promote its verbal articulation.

2 Presocratic Monism

There is in Homer no word for the comprehensive organ of consciousness, the subject or inner self (including thought, emotion, sensation, etc.) such as the ψυχή will be in later texts.[2] The idea of merging the subject with the divine is, for this and other reasons, in Homer inconceivable. Something approaching or implying the idea is first found in one of the very earliest fragments of Greek philosophy. According to Anaximenes B2:

> Just as the ψυχή, being our air, holds us together, so πνεῦμα (wind, breath) and air enclose the whole cosmos.

We also know that Anaximenes was a monist, maintaining that the material substrate of all things is air, which is transformed into other things by being condensed or rarefied. There is here consubstantiality of the human ψυχή (composed of air) to the whole cosmos (also composed of air), but how exactly Anaximenes envisaged this we cannot know. It is likely that he regarded air as divine.[3]

For the monist Herakleitos the cosmos is an ever-living fire (B30); the ψυχή too is composed – at least primarily[4] – of fire, and subject (like fire in general) to cyclical transformations into the other cosmological elements (B31, B36). We may infer that the individual ψυχή is a consubstantial fragment of the ever-living cosmic (*logos*-embodying) fire, with which it is on death united in the sense of being absorbed into the cosmic transformations of fire. Perhaps that is why the *logos* of the ψυχή is so deep (B45). It is also "communal" (ξυνός, B2): an influence on the communality that he advocates in this and other fragments was the communality achieved by the final stage of mystic initiation, which

2 Snell (1960) 1–22; defence of Snell: Seaford (2017) 11–14.

3 Anaximen. A10, A15; Arist. *Ph.* 203b7; Tor (2017) 21, n. 35.

4 It may – at least sometimes – have been in a sense composed (like the cosmos) of air as well as of fire – in varying proportions, Betegh (2007) – but this does not affect my basic point.

might also involve some kind of integration into the cosmos, such as becoming a chorus of stars.[5]

Parmenides too is a monist, maintaining that all that exists is one entity (ἕν) that is invariant in space and time (eternal, unchanging, unmoving, homogeneous), and cannot be apprehended by the senses. What is its relation to the subject? It cannot be one of physical consubstantiality, because the One is not a physical substance. But because the One is abstract (imperceptible), it becomes for the first time possible, in principle, that its relationship with the (imperceptible) inner self might be the extreme unity that we have seen in Plotinus. Parmenides does not make such extreme unity explicit, but does approach it. I will return to this issue once we have prepared the ground for it by discussing similar passages of Plato.

3 Plato

I select for scrutiny the three Platonic dialogues in which the influence of mystery-cult is explicit and substantial: *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. What relationships do they envisage between the soul (ψυχή) and the divine?

3.1 *Phaedo*

Firstly, there is the relationship of similarity:

> The ψυχή is most similar (ὁμοιότατον) to the divine (θεῖον) and immortal and νοητόν (apprehended by the mind, abstract) and uniform (μονοειδές) and indissoluble and changeless. (Pl. *Phd.* 80b)

The similarity of the ψυχή to this divine entity has eschatological implications. On death the ψυχή that has practised philosophy rightly

> goes away to what is similar (ὅμοιον) to itself, the invisible, the θεῖον and immortal and wise. (Pl. *Phd.* 81a)

And when the ψυχή

5 Heraclit. B1, B2, B44, B50, B89, B113, B114; Seaford (2004) 233–238; (2017) 28. Mystic communality: Plut. *Mor.* 81de, *fr.* 178; E. *Ba.* 72–75, 576–641 (esp. 616–637) with Seaford (1996) *ad loc.*; Ar. *Frogs* 156–157, 450–456, etc. Mystic chorus of stars: Seaford (2012) 43.

> inquires itself by itself (αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν), it departs to the pure and eternal and immortal and changeless, and being akin (συγγενής) to it remains with it always whenever it (the ψυχή) remains αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν. (Pl. *Phd.* 79d)

What we have in these three passages is an entity in the singular (ὅμοιον, αὐτοῦ, ἐκείνου) with overlapping characteristics. The ψυχή is 'similar' or 'akin'[6] to the entity, and may be 'with' it – i.e., in the same next-world *place*. Or the place itself is similar to the ψυχή:

> The ψυχή, the invisible, departs into another place like itself, noble and pure and invisible, to the (realm of) Hades ('Invisible') in truth, to the good and wise god … (Pl. *Phd.* 80d)

Dwelling or being with the gods in the next world is the privilege of true philosophers (69c, 81a, 82b). But if the ψυχή is too involved with the body, then it has no share in "being with (συνουσία)" the divine entity ("the divine and pure and uniform (μονοειδές)" (83e).

The characteristics of our divine entity are possessed by *Being* (reality, ἡ οὐσία, τὸ ὄν), which is pure (66a), invisible (78d–79a), "νοητόν and invisible" (83b), μονοειδές, self-contained (αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό), and changeless (78d). And so, the divine entity to which the invisible ψυχή is similar may also be described as invisible Being (78b–79b).

By its similarity to Being the ψυχή gains access to it. Only what is pure can have contact with the pure (67b). At 79d we learnt that the ψυχή – if it is to depart to (and remain with) the (pure, immortal, eternal, changeless) entity – has to be αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν (itself by itself, self-contained). And at 83b the philosophical ψυχή trusts only itself and its understanding – in its state of αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν – of αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό of things that are (i.e., of Being). This state of αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν is explained as arising from a process of internal self-gathering, from many sensations etc. to itself 'alone.'[7] It is the resulting self-containment that allows the philosopher access to the self-containment of Being (83b; cf. 84b): as we have seen, ψυχή and the divine entity are both uniform (μονοειδές).

Besides understanding it and being with it, the access may also be described as being in *contact* with it (ἐφάπτεσθαι, 67b, 79cd), *reaching* out to it (65c),

6 Also Pl. *Phd.* 79e, 84b.

7 Pl. *Phd.* 67c; 83ab; also 69b, 80e.

obtaining it (τευξόμενος, 66a), being *nourished* by it (84b),[8] even as *seeing* (what is) 'νοητόν and invisible.'[9]

3.2 *Mystic Initiation*

In *Phaedo* the passage describing the departure of the ψυχή to the invisible, divine, immortal and wise (81a) adds that, "as is said of the mystic initiates, it truly lives forever with the gods." In saying that those who arrive in Hades "initiated and purified will dwell with the gods," the founders of the mysteries meant those who have practised philosophy rightly (69c). Other explicit uses of mystic doctrine on death and the ψυχή are 62b and 108a.

The authority of mystery-cult concerning the post-mortem condition of the ψυχή is deployed by Plato in support of his own view. This is possible only because between mystic initiation and the Platonic doctrine there is similarity,[10] some elements of which we have already seen:

1. There is transition to an *eternal* blessed state.
2. This final state is accessible *in this world*, through initiation or philosophy.[11]
3. The final state includes being *with the gods*.
4. The *purified* are eternally distinct from the impure.

Further similarities are:

5. The impure suffer at death by trying to hold on to life.[12]
6. In the final state the purified are *with pure people* [13] in a *pure place*.[14]
7. The final state is preceded by agitated *wandering*.[15]
8. The ritual culminates in *seeing* the previously unseen.[16]
9. The ritual achieves *calm*.[17]

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8 Cf. Pl. *Phdr*. 247d, 248c.

9 Pl. *Phd*. 83b; cf. seeing the divine at 84b.

10 On Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13; on Orphic mystic union see Chpt. 7. Sect. 1 and n. 5; on Egyptian mystic union see Chpt. 3 and nn. 8, 18, 30. On theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13, sect. 1.3 and n. 18; Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, sect. 3.

11 In the former case by ritually rehearsing death, in the latter by detaching the ψυχή – so far as is possible – from the body (Pl. *Phd*. 64ab, 65c, 66a, 67a–d, 83a).

12 Pl. *Phd*. 81cd, 108ab; Plut. *Fr*. 178.

13 Pl. *Phd*. 67a; Plut. *Fr*. 178.

14 Pl. *Phd*. 80d, 114c; Plut. *Fr*. 178.

15 Pl. *Phd*. 79cd, cf. 66a, 66d, 81cd, 108a–c; Plut. *Fr*. 178; Seaford (2012) 28.

16 Pl. *Phd*. 83b. Mysteries: *passim*.

17 Mysteries: Seaford (1996) 201; (2009). Philosophy: Pl. *Phd*. 84a γαλήνη. Cf. mystic apparitions as γαλήνης μεστά ('full of calm') at Procl. *in R*. II.185.3 Kroll.

10. The ritual may have moved from mental fragmentation to self-contained unity.

This last point deserves further exploration. If the blessedness of the initiates after their initial agitation involved a calm sense of wholeness, this would underlie the description (in the *Epinomis* attributed to Plato) of a blessed person as (986a):

> having been initiated (μεμυημένος) truly and really, participating, *being one*, *in one* thinking (μεταλαβὼν φρονησέως εἷς ὢν μιᾶς). (Pl. *Epin.* 986a)

The experience of the dismemberment and reconstitution of Dionysos, which we know to have played a central role in Dionysiac mystic initiation,[18] was likely to have included a sense of (*mental*) fragmentation followed by return to mental unity. Certainly the myth had that meaning in Neoplatonism.[19] Physical fragmentation implies mental fragmentation also at Plato *Laws* 672b ("Dionysos was torn apart – διεφορήθη – by Hera"), which while evoking bodily dismemberment (especially as Hera prompted the Titans to dismember him) does in fact refer in fact to his *mental* fragmentation, resulting in his creating βακχείαι etc.[20] And in Euripides' *Bacchae* (968–969) the bodily dismemberment of Pentheus both implies mental fragmentation[21] and belongs to a series of unusual experiences that derive from the experience of mystic initiation.[22] Bodily fragmentation as an expression of mental fragmentation is, besides being a commonplace of Lacanian psychology, natural enough in a culture that does not yet have the concept of the 'incorporeal' (first found in Plato[23]). It is implicit also in the cosmology of Empedocles, in which alternating fragmentation and integration creates separated body parts, whole-natured (οὐλοφυεῖς) shapes, and – with extreme integration – "a sphere rejoicing in its supremely joyous solitariness" (i.e., in being all there is).[24]

In Parmenides B8.4 the variant reading οὐλομελές, "whole-limbed," meaning bodily wholeness, may belong to the same phenomenon, to which I will return below. But first, what of the similarity of the ψυχή to Being and the divine? Did this fundamental Platonic idea have any presence in mystic initiation?

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18 Seaford (1994) 283–284; West (1983) 140–75 (including comparative evidence for bodily fragmentation imagined as mental fragmentation).

19 Seaford (1998) 142. And see below on Parm. B8.4 οὐλομελές.

20 Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 389a; Seaford 2004: 309.

21 Seaford (1998) 135; (1996) 227.

22 Seaford (1996) passim.

23 Demonstrated in convincing detail by Renehan (1980).

24 Emp. B57; B62.4; B26.16; etc. Seaford (2004) 226–227.

3.3 *Phaedrus*

The vision of the ψυχή in *Phaedrus* contains numerous features – and explicit mentions – of mystic initiation.[25] Here for instance is 250bc:

> Then it was possible to see beauty (κάλλος) shining, when, with a blessed (εὐδαίμων) chorus – we following with Zeus, others with another god – they saw the blessed sight and vision and were initiated into what it is right to call the most blessed of mystic initiations (ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην), which we were celebrating (ὠργιάζομεν) ourselves being whole (ὁλόκληροι) and without experience of the sufferings which awaited us in the time to come, being initiated into and watching (μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες) whole (ὁλόκληρα) and simple (ἁπλᾶ) and untrembling (ἀτρεμῆ) and blessed (εὐδαίμονα) apparitions (φάσματα) in pure light, ourselves being pure (ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες) and not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body. (Pl. *Phdr*. 250bc)

This resembles the *Phaedo* in the following respects:

(a) In both dialogues the vision is made possible by the detachment of the ψυχή from the body (in *Phaedrus* in a previous existence).

(b) In both dialogues the initiated ψυχαί have the company of the gods.[26]

(c) In *Phaedrus* (as we have seen for *Phaedo*) the ψυχή resembles what it sees: both are ὁλόκληρος and εὐδαίμων and καθαρός. With καθαρός the resemblance is emphasised by its immediate repetition. Further, ἀτρεμῆ of the mystic apparitions applies also in fact to their beholders, who as initiates would have ceased the trembling (τρόμος) characterising the first, anxious stage of initiation that preceded the joyful transition to the blessed vision.[27] In *Phaedo* this trembling is reflected in the "fluttering" (ἐπτοημένη, 108a) of the ψυχή that anxiously resists death because attached to bodily desire.

(d) The self-containment and uniformity of the ψυχή in *Phaedo* arose from internal self-gathering from many to one. In *Phaedrus* the sight of Being into which the ψυχή was in a previous life initiated[28] is remembered

25 Carefully analysed by Riedweg (1987) 30–69.

26 At Pl. *Phdr*. 252e2–3 the ψυχή is to be assimilated to Zeus.

27 Plut. *Fr*. 178; more passages (including fluttering of the ψυχή) discussed in Seaford (2009), (2018) 370–377.

28 Some depart "uninitiated (ἀτελεῖς) in the sight of Being" (Pl. *Phdr*. 248b). For seeing Being see also Pl. *Phdr*. 247c, 247d, 248c.

> through understanding according to εἶδος (idea, kind) that comes from being collected from many perceptions into One (ἕν) by reasoning (249b). Such remembering done correctly is a continuous initiation (249c), and the mental unity is evoked by the 'wholeness' of the ψυχή undergoing initiation (250c), a wholeness that also characterises what it saw – and so is comparable to the self-containment and uniformity characterising both ψυχή *and* what it sees in *Phaedo*.

The emphatic mystic language of our *Phaedrus* passage implies – I suggest – the possibility that the assimilation between subject and object was a feature of the practise of mystic initiation. In one of the mystic formulae preserved on funerary gold leaves of the fourth-century BCE the initiand (addressing gods) says "I claim to be of your happy race,"[29] and in another that "I sank beneath the κόλπος (lap, womb) of the mistress, the chthonic queen."[30] In the much later description by Proclus[31] initiands "put themselves into the same disposition as (συνδιατίθεσθαι) the sacred symbols and, standing wholly outside themselves, are established in (ἐνιδρῦσθαι) the gods and have god within them."[32]

3.4 *Light*

Another mode of contact between *phasmata* and initiates in our *Phaedrus* passage is indicated by the *phasmata* being "in pure light, ourselves being pure (ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες)." That was in our previous life, but we have just been told that in this one:

> in the likenesses here of justice and of self-control (σωφροσύνη), and other things valuable to the soul, there is no light, but a few people approaching the images (εἰκόνες) with difficulty through ἀμυδρός (dim, faint) organs see the γένος (genus, kind) of what they are images of. (Pl. *Phdr*. 250bc)

Note that there is a deficiency of light *within* the likenesses described as images, along with deficient strength in our organs.

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29 Graf and Johnston (2007) 12–15 (leaves 5, 6, and 7).

30 Graf and Johnston (2007) 12 (leaf 5).

31 Procl. *in R*. II.108.17–30 Kroll.

32 With "in the gods" cf. the mystic formula preserved on a funerary gold leaf from eight centuries earlier: "I sank beneath the κόλπος (lap, womb) of the mistress, the chthonic queen": Graf and Johnston (2007) 12, n. 5.

A little later in *Phaedrus* the ψυχή, allegorised as charioteer, came to the beloved boy and saw his face ἀστράπτουσαν (the verb from ἀστραπή, lightning), and "his memory was brought to the nature of beauty, and he saw αὐτὴν (it, her) again with σωφροσύνη standing on a pure base (ἐν ἁγνῶι βάθρωι)" (Pl. *Phdr.* 254b). Βάθρον can mean the base of a statue, ἁγνός is used of the mysteries, and various ancient authors[33] indicate that statues were revealed in the mysteries. And so Riedweg argues that ἐν ἁγνῶι βάθρωι is, like the epiphany of Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to* Demeter (278–280), based on the revelation of statues in a bright light in the Eleusinian mysteries.[34] This is just one of the many mystic allusions in the passage. I will now supplement his argument with considerations that bear on our theme of contact with the divine.

We have seen that an 'image' of σωφροσύνη occurred also earlier, with "no light in it," contrasting with the mystic vision of apparitions "in pure light." A votive plaque from the Eleusinian sanctuary shows Demeter with rays of light *emerging* from her head.[35] This prompts Clinton to suggest that in Eleusinian initiation statues were illuminated *from within*.[36] In the epiphany of Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn*, a passage compared in detail to *Phaedrus* 250bc by Riedweg, "a light shone far out from the immortal skin of the goddess … the compact house was filled with radiance like lightning" (278–280). Riedweg rightly compares this to ἀστράπτουσαν in *Phaedrus* 254b. Light is common in epiphany, but it is also significant that in this crucial text, aetiological of the mystic ritual, the ubiquitous 'radiance like lightning' comes *from* the goddess. Similarly, the face of the beautiful boy *Phaedrus* "lightnings."

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, after the extraordinary experiences of Pentheus within the house, Dionysos tells him to be σώφρων (641), and to "place a calm base (ἥσυχον βάσιν)[37] under your temper" (647). Pentheus' experiences have throughout, and especially in this scene, strikingly resembled in detail those of the mystic initiand,[38] and here are two further mystic features, ἡσυχία and its embodiment in the statue base, which resembles the mystic idea of σωφροσύνη and beauty on a pure statue base in *Phaedrus*.

However, my main concern with this passage of *Bacchae* is to emphasise the *identifications* of Dionysos – in his mystic lightning-creating epiphany –

33 Discussed by Riedweg (1987) 62, n. 163.

34 Riedweg (1987) 52, 61–64.

35 *IG* II^2 4639.

36 Clinton (2004). The ἔλλαμψις of statues in ritual mentioned by Procl. *Theol.Plat.* I.124.23–25 may derive from the same practice.

37 The emendation βάσιν was proposed (by Bloomfield) without regard to the mysteries; ms. πόδα is impossible: see Seaford (1996) 203.

38 Seaford (1996) 195–203.

with light at 608, and again at 630, where the φῶς is attacked by Pentheus and so inevitably evokes φῶς ("man"),[39] with φαεννόν ⟨εἶδος⟩ in the next line suggesting *starlight*.[40] There is plenty of evidence (from the fifth-century BCE onwards) that in mystery-cult gods were identifed with the light-containing heavenly bodies, the sun and the stars, that could shine in the underworld.[41] For instance, Iakchos (the Eleusinian Dionysos) is in Aristophanes' *Frogs* called "light-bearing star of the night-time mystic ritual" in the underworld (343–344), and in Sophokles' *Antigone* Dionysos is invited to come from Eleusis as "chorus-leader of the fire-breathing stars" (1146–1147), on which the scholiast comments "according to a mystic *logos*."

Dionysos is in this passage of *Antigone* invited to come to *purify* Thebes. For Plotinus (invoking *Phaedrus*) introspection leads to seeing σωφροσύνη standing ἐν ἁγνῶι βάθρωι, and is like working on a statue until – significantly – "the god-like splendour of virtue shines out (ἐκλάμψειε) to you": all this is *within* you, to obtain internal *purity* (1.6.9). The initiates in *Phaedrus* are 'initiated into and watch' whole and untrembling and blessed (just like themselves) *phasmata* 'in pure light, themselves being pure' (ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες).

The implication is that the purity of the light is shared by the initiates, even that the initiates are purified by the light.[42] The mystic Dionysos is both star and chorus-leader of the stars. The ubiquity of light from a single divine source (especially when penetrating the darkness, as in the mysteries) may bring us close to the divine. For Plotinus to be pure light is to be god (Plot. *Enn.* VI.9.9.58–59). Parmenides (B1) is led on his mystic journey to the afterlife by the daughters of the Sun, on the path (of an anonymous δαίμων, probably the Sun) that carries the εἰδὼς φῶς ("knowing man") – a phrase certainly evocative of mystic initiation[43] and perhaps also (Tor argues) of εἰδὼς φῶς ("knowing light").[44] To Tor's case I add that the same ambivalence occurred – also in a

39 At 630 the mss. φῶς is certainly right. Editors and translators continue to accept the emendation φάσμα because it makes better sense to those unaware of the mystic content.

40 Seaford (1996) 202.

41 Seaford (2005).

42 Given the detailed correspondences between mystic initiation and the cross-cultural Near-Death Experience (NDE) that is much documented in modern times, it is worth mentioning here the wonderful light that in the NDE is often (a) identified with a person (sometimes a god), the so-called Being of Light, and (b) experienced as transformative: detail in Seaford (2005) and (2010).

43 Scholarship listed by Tor (2017) 255, n. 78.

44 Cf. Vlastos' argument (1946) that for Parmenides "the mind's power to think Being implies just such a power … to merge itself wholly with the light." This is worked out in detail by Tor (2017) 222–249.

heavily mystic context – at *Bacchae* 630. Finally, in all three accounts in the *Acts of the Apostles* of the conversion of Saul, which is in various details influenced (at least indirectly) by mystic ritual, "Luke imagined the occurrence in such a way that Saul's companions saw only a formless glare where he himself saw in it the figure of Jesus."[45] Saul is not identified or united with the light/god, but he is *enveloped* in it: "the light from heaven αὐτὸν περιήστραψεν (lightninged around him)" (Acts 9:3), and the same rare verb is used of the same event at 22:6.[46]

3.5 *Symposium*

The structure and language of mystic initiation play an important part in the speech of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*.[47] She distinguishes the preliminary erotics, which "even you, Socrates, might be initiated into" (209e5), from the more arduous τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά – the final vision of mystic initiation, in which the lover progresses from the beauty of the particular (corporeal) to beauty in general, from the many to the one, and in approaching the τέλος (completion, perfection) will suddenly see something amazingly beautiful, "the beautiful itself": eternal, changeless, absolute,[48] incorporeal, divine, "itself in itself with itself uniform (αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό μεθ' αὑτοῦ μονοειδές)" (210e–11b1), and "εἰλικρινές, καθαρόν, ἄμεικτον (simple, pure, unmixed) … he would be able to see the divine beautiful μονοειδές itself" (211e).

Most of these characteristics of the beautiful also characterise Being in *Phaedo*: both are αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό, μονοειδές, εἰλικρινές, καθαρόν, eternal, changeless, incorporeal, and divine (θεῖον). In *Symposium* the repeatedly emphasised desired relation to the (divine) beautiful is *seeing* it ("being with it," also occurs, at 212a2), but there is less concern with ψυχή than in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, and so less assimilation of subject to what it sees: a slight instance is the implication of Diotima's final remark that the person who has had the right vision of the eternal beautiful engenders true goodness and may become, if any human can,[49] immortal (212a7). Eternal well-being in the next world was obtained, in our earliest evidence for mystic initiation, by "seeing" the rituals.[50] If seeing x obtains eternal well-being, then (for philosophy at least) the eternity may inhere in x.

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45 Haenchen (1971), who has no interest in mystic ritual; Seaford (1997).

46 Though not at 22.13, where however the light is called brighter than the sun. Cf. Luke 17:24.

47 Demonstrated in detail by Riedweg (1987) 1–29.

48 I.e., not depending on mode, time, context, place or beholder.

49 Cf. Pl. *Phdr*. 249c, 253a.

50 *H.Hom.Dem*. 476–482; Soph. *Fr*. 837.

4 Parmenides

We return to Parmenides. B3 τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι probably means that "to understand is the same as to be," but might mean (or also mean) that "the same thing is there for understanding and being." This and numerous other passages are ably deployed by Chiara Robbiano (2006) to argue that Parmenides maintained the unity of the knowing subject with Being. My purpose here is not to summarise her argument but to expand its scope by introducing Plato and mystic initiation (and – briefly in the next section – money).

> Look equally at absent things (ἀπεόντα) that are firmly present things (παρεόντα) to the mind (νοῦς). For you will not cut off for yourself what *is* from holding to what *is*, neither scattering everywhere in every way in order nor drawing together. (Parm. B4)

The identification of ἀπεόντα with παρεόντα implies a close relation of object with subject. Further, what exists (the One) is seen by imaginative introspection to be continuous,[51] as it is simply stated to be at B8.6 ("one, continuous") and B8.24–25 ("It is all full of what exists. So, it is all continuous, for what exists draws near to what exists"). The abstract content (preconceived as continuous) of introspection is assimilated to (if not identified with) the abstract One (preconceived as continuous). In "seeing absent things." the mind (*nous*) is distinguished from perception (sight and hearing are disparaged at B7.4): similarly the Platonic ψυχή withdraws into itself and trusts nothing except itself and as αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν thinks the αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό of what exists, and "sees (what is) invisible and intelligible" (Plato, *Phaedo* 83ab), just as in Parmenides Being "remains ταὐτον τ'ἐν ταὐτῶι and lies καθ' ἑαυτό, and thus fixed it will remain" (B8.29–30), and – to return from object to subject – absent things are "firmly" present to the mind (B4.1). The preconceived vision of continuity may depend on a self-contained *stillness* of object and of subject.

This brings us to B8.4: (the One is) is οὖλον μουνογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἠδ' ἀτέλεστον ("whole and the only member of its kind (unique) and untrembling and without end"). This is how the line is transmitted by Simplicius, but there are textual problems: ἠδ' ἀτέλεστον is suspect, and Plutarch (*Mor.* 1114) writes as the beginning of the line ἐστι γὰρ οὐλομελές ("for it is whole-limbed"). Proclus too quotes the line with οὐλομελές.

51 Temporally as well as spatially, despite B.8.25: in the thought experiment (look!) what is imagined (absent) is not restricted to simultaneity.

Let us first focus on "untrembling (ἀτρεμές)," which in *Phaedrus* is applied to what the initiates see and would also be appropriate for initiates themselves, for we know that initiates were freed from trembling. Here too in Parmenides its application to the object (the One) implies assimilation between object and subject, which is made more explicit by the goddess' injunction to learn "the untrembling (ἀτρεμές) heart of perfectly circular (εὐκυκλέος)[52] truth (ἀληθείης)" (B1.29). Εὔκυκλος is also applied to the One (8.43), and ἀληθείη here has been called both "reality" (Tor 2017, 156) and "a condition of the knowing subject" (Robbiano 2006, 53).[53] Certainly 'heart' introduces the untrembling *subject*. The complete union of subject with object associated by Plotinus with mystic initiation was in an "untrembling (ἀτρεμής) state" (Plot. *Enn.* VI.9.11.14).

This brings us to the variant "whole-limbed" (οὐλομελές). In *Phaedrus* the initiated *and* what they see are not only both untrembling (ἀτρεμής), they are also both *whole* (ὁλόκληρος). We have also seen that *bodily* dismemberment followed by reintegration might in mystic initiation express the mental fragmentation (accompanied by trembling) that was superseded by reintegration and calm. The result is that οὐλομελές here in B8.4 goes *perfectly* with ἀτρεμές. Moreover, it is the *lectio difficilior*: it is difficult to see why the outlandish οὐλομελές would have been introduced. Indeed – in the absence of the considerations I am advancing – the bland μουνογενές[54] must have seemed, and still seems, obviously preferable,[55] despite its inconsistency with ἀγένητον in the previous verse.

Two points remain to complete the argument. The first is that the revelation to Parmenides is envisaged – as in *Phaedrus* – as mystic initiation,[56] which may connect with the biographical detail that he was "converted towards ἡσυχία (calm)."[57] The second concerns the last words of the line, ἠδ' ἀτέλεστον, which

52 εὐκυκλέος Simpicius; εὐφεγγέος Proclus; εὐπειθέος Sextus.

53 A (mystic) instance of ἀληθείη combining subject with object is in a fourth-century BCE mystic gold leaf [Graf and Iles Johnston (2007) 34, n. 25]: the (dead) initiate is to avoid one spring (of *lethe*, forgetfulness) and utter the 'whole ἀληθείη' (that he is the child of Earth and Sky) while asking to drink from the lake of memory, thereby evoking the etymological connection of ἀ-ληθείη with not forgetting.

54 "the only one of its kind." For Mourelatos (2008) 113 it means 'of a single kind' (he gives no parallels).

55 Owen (1960) urges that Plutarch was often inaccurate in quoting, and misquotes the end of this very line (but so do the other sources for it).

56 References in Seaford (2004) 185, n. 58; also 228–229, 263–265; Burkert (1969); more detail is provided recently by Tor (2017) 250–273.

57 By Ameinias (Sotion ap. D.L. 9.23), who is otherwise unknown, and so the detail was unlikely to be invented. Ἡσυχία was achieved in mystic initiation: Seaford (1996) 201.

occurs in all transmitted versions, and has to mean here "and without end." But it has been noted that (a) this meaning merely repeats ἀνώλεθρον (imperishable) in the previous line; (b) nowhere else does ἀτέλεστος have this meaning; (c) in Homer ἠδ' ἀτέλεστον means "and unfulfilled" (*Iliad* 4.26); (d) the One is *not* ἀτελεύτητον (without end) (B8.32) and *is* τετελέσμενον (fulfilled, perfected) (B8.42).

And so, Owen[58] proposed to read ἠδὲ τελεῖον, which is now – like μουνογενές – generally accepted. Better though is the older (and slighter) emendation οὐδ' ἀτέλεστον (Brandis). This produces a powerfully coherent verse, in which all three descriptions of the One both prefigure later descriptions of it[59] and apply also to the subject at the conclusion of mystic initiation. Ἀτέλεστος has only two meanings: unperfected (or unfulfilled), and uninitiated – a meaning it has in Euripides' *Bacchae* for instance (40), and in Plato's *Phaedo*: the uninitiated (ἀτελέστος), equated by Plato with the non-philosopher, will in Hades lie in the mud (69c: see above). Here in Parmenides it applies primarily to the One ('not unperfected') but also evokes the initiatory subject ('not uninitiated'): in both these respects it functions just like οὐλομελές and ἀτρεμές. The triple description (οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς οὐδ' ἀτέλεστον)[60] evokes the three fundamental respects in which the initiate who has reached the final phase is similar to the mystic object.

Another form of agitation in the preliminary phase of mystic initiation, besides trembling and disintegration, was *wandering*, which we saw reflected in Plato's *Phaedo*: in Parmenides it is reflected in the "wandering" (πλακτός) mind (B6.6) of those take the wrong path, which was itself (as we see from the right and wrong paths in the funerary gold leaves) a feature of mystic initiation.

5 From Homer to Neoplatonism

We have seen that (a) there is in Homer no comprehensive inner self; (b) in the first extant focus on the comprehensive inner self (the ψυχή in Presocratic Ionian philosophy) it is consubstantial with all that fully exists; (c) in Parmenides the abstract content of thought (at the least) resembles what exists (the abstract One); (d) in Plato, the individual ψυχή can through philo-

58 Owen (1960) 101–102.

59 Parm. B8.26, 29–30, 38, 42.

60 I do not insist on initial ἐστι γάρ, which may be Plutarch's own words.

sophy assimilate itself to what fully exists; (e) in Plotinus the inner self may be completely united both within itself and with what fully exists.

Given the selectivity of these snapshots, we can barely call this a 'development.' And even if we could, to ask what explains or underlies the development would be regarded by many as too big a question. I however regard the question as important, even if impossible to answer fully. In any event I cannot understand how an explanation of such fundamental transitions can be anything other than (in part) *historical*. But all I can do here is to briefly indicate the *kind* of historical explanation that I favour.

I have elsewhere tried to explain the transitions from (a) to (b) and from (b) to (c). Homer is premonetary, and Presocratic monism is a *projection* of (all-unifying, increasingly abstract) monetary value, which is concomitantly *introjected* as the abstract inner self.[61] I will not even try to summarise this argument here. I merely note that the features that we have seen as shared by object and subject (each is invisible, unitary, uniform, unmixedly pure, changeless, self-contained) are also features of (abstract) *monetary value* as it has to be imagined, i.e., as distinct from circulation.[62] Subject resembles object because each is in part modelled on monetary value (introjected as subject, projected as object). But here I will focus here on the distinctive *individualism* of Plato.

This individualism contrasts both with the Ionian consubstantiality of the ψυχή with what fully exists and with Plotinus' full mystic union of the subject with everything.[63] The Platonic individual ψυχή is (a) identified with the person,[64] (b) incorporeal,[65] (c) immortal, and (c) strictly irreducible to anything (or anybody) else. This combination produces an unprecedented form of individualism. There may be *assimilation* of individual ψυχή to the divine or to god, but not *merging* or *identification*. This 'theology of approximation' (Tor) is true of Plato generally.[66]

Other Platonic ideas seem to qualify this individualism. Firstly, a mortal can have a deity within him or her. Secondly, the Creator mixed the ψυχή of the universe with other material in a bowl before dividing it into numerous ψυχαί

61 Seaford (2004) 2017.

62 Seaford (2004) 256–261.

63 As for Parmenides, the little we know of his doctrine of the ψυχή suggests that it combines some consubstantiality with some individualism: probably the ψυχή in metempsychosis preserves its individual identity, as in Plato: Tor (2017) 222–250, at 235–236.

64 Pl. *Lg*. 959ab; *Alc*. I 130c.

65 Pl. *Sph*. 247b–d; Renehan (1980).

66 Tor (2017) 250–251.

(*Timaeus* 41d). Thirdly, assimilation to abstract Being can be achieved (and so is in a limited sense *shared*) by philosophers. But none of this plays the kind of role played in Herakleitos by the communality of the abstract *logos* that – embodied in the fire of cosmos and ψυχή, and associated with the communality of the mystic *logos* – seems to have ethical, eschatological and political consequences.[67]

In Plato there is (apart from being with the gods) so far as I know only one (very slight) indication of mystic communality (*Phd.* 67a).[68] In the mystic process in *Phaedrus* many *psuchai* trample on each other and then simply go away "uninitiated in the vision of Being."[69] That the communal aspect of mystic initiation may even have been distasteful to Plato is indicated by the metaphor of mystic initiation at *Republic* 560e, in which an individual initiate is *negatively* transformed by the entry of a *chorus* of crowned and resplendent *vices*. Each Platonic ψυχή is in this life imprisoned in the body, and – even if it does practice philosophy rightly – destined in the hereafter for eternal blessed *self-containment*, itself by itself (αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν). This is far removed from the mystic "joining the ψυχή to the *thiasos* (θιασεύεται ψυχάν)" in *Bacchae* (75), written by a fellow citizen when Plato was in his early twenties. Nor is it complete union with the divine (as in Plotinus).

In thinking about the conditions for this unprecedented form of individualism, I must limit myself here to two further passages of *Phaedo*. In the first (69ab) the attempt to avoid one pleasure by indulging in another is compared to *exchange* (of pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains), in which in fact the only right currency (νόμισμα), for which all the pleasures and pains must be exchanged, is wisdom (φρόνησις). This is one of numerous passages on the basis of which I have argued that the earliest idea of the inner self is constructed (in part) through the *introjection* of monetary value: part of the inner self is, just like monetary value, a unitary abstract entity that invisibly controls the concrete multiplicity in which it is embodied.[70] The introjection has the same form as what is envisaged by Plotinus when he says that the ψυχή contains many powers (reasoning, desiring, etc.), which are

67 B1, B2, B25, B36, B44, B113, B114, B117, B118, B136.

68 μετὰ τοιούτων (with no noun) refers – as almost always elsewhere – to *people* (not things), as in its only other occurrence in Pl. *Men.* 90b3: cf. the "pure men" whom the initiated join in Plut. *Fr.* 178. In non-mystic contexts Plato did envisage companionship in the next world; e.g., Pl. *Ap.* 41b.

69 Pl. *Phdr.* 248b1–5; Riedweg (1987) 65–62.

70 Seaford (2017).

> held together by the one as by a bond. So, the ψυχή brings the one (τὸ ἕν) to other things being also itself one (ἕν) by something else. (Plot. *Enn.* VI.9.1.40–43, transl. Armstrong)

Money, in granting each individual possession of (in principle) comprehensive power over goods and people, in thereby promoting individual self-sufficiency and *isolation*, is introjected as a model for the new isolated comprehensive inner self. In *Phaedo* (and elsewhere), in the ingathering of the multiplicity of the inner self to a single abstract entity, a typical movement of mystic initiation (from fragmentation to wholeness) coheres with the introjection of the internally controlled external power of unitary abstract (monetary) value over the multiplicity of goods.

Inasmuch as the Herakleitean *logos*-embodied-in-fire, for instance, or the Parmenidean One, are also (in part) *projections* of monetary value, they already resemble the inner self. But I note this only in passing. My concern here is rather with the theme of the *control* exercised (in inner self and in universe) by the unitary abstract entity. This brings us to the other remaining passage of *Phaedo* (80ab).

When ψυχή and body are joined together, nature directs the ψυχή to *rule* and the body to *be ruled*, and so the ψυχή resembles the divine (θεῖον) and the body the mortal.[71] This is one of a series of oppositions, Plato concludes, between ψυχή (immortal, uniform, intellectual, indissoluble, ever-unchanging) and the body (mortal, multiform, without intellect, dissoluble, always changing).

This insistence, that the power of the ψυχή to *dominate* resembles the divine, is fundamental. Plato's metaphysics has at its heart unitary abstract substance (Being), on which (embodied in money) his everyday well-being and rational control of material processes entirely depend. From an aristocratic family, he did not possess wealth on a tyrannical scale, but did leave a considerable amount in his will, including slaves.[72] He describes the attitude of the properly educated person towards slaves as contempt,[73] and in *Laws* proposes for slavery legislation the tenor of which has been described as more severe than the actual law of Athens at the time.[74] He was born into

71 Because the ψυχή has the source of its motion within it, and the body does not, it is prior to the body and by nature rules it (Pl. *Lg.* 896b–c). And because it initiates (rather than receiving) motion and transformation, it is immortal (Pl. *Phdr.* 246a).

72 D.L. 3.41–43. There is nothing in this prosaic will to provoke scepticism.

73 Pl. *R.* 578e, 549a.

74 Finley (1981) 105.

a polis recently transformed by the full advent of the inter-related institutions of monetised individual property and chattel slavery, both of which – I maintain – are crucial for understanding his metaphysics.[75] The power that his possession of unitary abstract Being (in money) gives to his inner self over goods and people – allowing the leisure for philosophy and for social and political engagement – *must remain distinct* from what it controls, just as – when introjected – it must remain distinct from the desires and sensations that it controls. And so his inner self cannot merge with the One as described by Plotinus ("himself ἕν, having no distinction in relation to himself or to other things"). The devotion of Plotinus to Plato, and the quotations from Plato and shared vocabulary in his description of the mystic experience, require an explanation for this basic divergence between them. One factor may have been Plato's relation to monetised property (especially slaves). Plotinus was – though capable of keeping accounts[76] – probably dependent on the economic support of the wealthy,[77] as were some other philosophers of his era: for instance, he praised the senator Rogatianus, who gave up all his property, servants, and status to take up philosophy and live off his friends.[78] Platonic individualism remained influential, in part because it expressed the general reality of monetised individual property; but for the same reason it created the emotional need that was met by the 'mystic unification to the divine' of Neoplatonism.

6 India

The advantage of turning finally to India is that it provides a historical sequence of metaphysical ideas, from the Rigveda to the Upanishads and bey-

75 For slavery in Platonic metaphysics see Vlastos (1973) 147–163. The theme has been further developed in my monograph on Indian and Greek philosophy; Seaford (2020).

76 He was entrusted with the guardianship of young people, and ensured that the accounts of their property were accurate, saying that – so long as they did not take to philosophy – their properties and incomes must be kept untouched and saved for them (Porph. *Vit. Plot.* 9). However, Porphyry adds, this activity on behalf of others never caused him to relax his intense concentration on the intellect.

77 Porphyry does not mention any property belonging to Plotinus, except that "the house for him was filled" (ἐπεπλήρωτο αὐτῶι ἡ οἰκία) with the young people of whom he was guardian, but this is just after we are told that he lived in the house (οἰκία) of Gemina (9). Plotinus had wealthy admirers, including even the emperor Gallienus. In his last illness he left Rome for a property 'of Zethos' (a deceased friend), with his needs being met from the estates of Zethos and Castricius (2).

78 Porph. *Vit. Plot.* 7; for instances from the second-century CE see Dillon (2002) 35–37.

ond, that is strikingly similar to what we find in Greece. The attempt to explain this similarity (along with the differences) sheds new light on both cultures.

One aspect of the similarity is the absence from the Rigveda, as from Homer, of an organ of comprehensive consciousness. Then in the earliest Upanishads – roughly contemporary with Presocratic philosophy – such an organ, the *ātman*, becomes of central importance, just as the ψυχή does in Greek philosophy. This was also in India the period in which, as in Greece, money was becoming all-pervasive.

The *ātman* is "smaller than a grain of rice… but … larger even than all these worlds put together… it contains all actions, all desires, all smells, and all tastes; it has captured this whole world."[79] And it is identified with the abstract universal principle known as *brahman*. The identification of *ātman* with the universe resembles – but goes beyond – what we find in early Greek philosophy. The explanation of this, and of numerous other similarities and differences between the Greek and the Indian development, I discuss in my 2020 monograph on the theme. Here I note merely that the Upanishadic doctrines were, in contrast to Greek philosophy, produced from within the priestly (Brahminical) tradition, in which the central act was the maximisation by the priests of the metaphysical benefit absorbed by the individual subject from the sacrificial rite of passage that he sponsored. This cosmic rite of passage was, though on behalf of a single individual, roughly equivalent in structure and aim to Greek mystic initiation. Among the effects of the new (abstract, comprehensive, immediate) power of money on this tradition was to promote the idea of an abstract, comprehensive inner self (*ātman*), and to make the metaphysical benefit more immediate, and more comprehensive – especially as *brahman*, whose meaning was thereby transformed from ritual benefit to universal abstract power-entity. In both cultures there is a synthesis of the cosmic rite of passage with monetisation.

I conclude by illustrating the emergence of the universal *ātman* (in the unity of subject with object) with a single passage, from the seventh book of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. We start with a typical feature of these texts, a long chain of dependences, in which each item is said to depend on the next: speech depends on mind, which depends on intention, which depends on deep reflection, which depends on perception, which depends on strength, and so on. Towards the end, action depends on (22) *sukha* (happiness, well-being), which is (23) identified with *bhūman* (abundance, plenitude).[80] This

79 *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.3.

80 It is "abundance" in Roebuck's translation (Penguin), "plenitude" in Olivelle's (Oxford World's Classics).

is the end of the chain. We then read (24) that 'where a man sees, hears, or discerns no other thing, that is *bhūman*,' which is immortal. Next:

> On what is *bhūman* based? On one's own greatness. Or maybe it is not based on greatness. Cattle and horses, elephants and gold, slaves and wives, farms and houses – these are what people here call greatness. But I don't consider them that way; no, I don't, for they are all based on each other.[81]

There follows an alternative conception:

> that (i.e., *bhūman*) extends over this whole world. Now, the substitution of the word "I" … I extend over this whole world. Next, the substitution of *ātman* … the *ātman* extends over this whole world.

Through "substitution" *ātman* has replaced greatness and property as what *bhūman* is based on, as the final item in the chain of dependence. This is then immediately justified by the claim that someone who sees, thinks, and perceives it thus, and (*inter alia*) attains bliss in the *ātman*, becomes completely his own master and obtains complete freedom to move in all the worlds; the items in the chain of dependence, and the whole world, spring from his *ātman*; whereas those who perceive it otherwise are ruled over by others and obtain perishable worlds (25–26).

Action, on which ultimately all other things depend (in the chain of dependence), itself depends on well-being, which depends on *bhūman*, which people regard as based on items of individual property. This makes practical sense: it is individual property that is fundamental, it is on individual property that intention, performing rituals, and everything else in the chain depends. However, we have also been told that *bhūman* is where someone perceives no other thing, i.e., that it involves dissolution of the distinction between subject and object (as in Plotinus), and that this is immortal. Further, *bhūman* extends over this whole world, and is substituted by *ātman*, which extends over this whole world; and devotion to atman brings self-sufficient freedom (not being ruled by others). The self-sufficient freedom brought by *bhūman* is normally individual property, but is here redefined.

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81 This is Olivelle's translation of *anyo hy anyasmin pratiṣṭhita iti*, i.e., literally "for another is based/founded on another," a single syntactic unit referring to the things listed in the previous sentence. Roebuck translates "That is not what I am saying. I say" he said "that it is other, and rests on something other."

And so, at the end of the chain of dependences, *plenitude* (*bhūman*) is both *projected* (as co-extensive with the world) and *introjected* (interiorised) as *ātman*, which is co-extensive with the world. This is how immortal *bhūman* assimilates object to subject. Similarly, in early Greek metaphysics money is both projected and introjected, involving the immortalising assimilation of object to subject. Parmenides both *projects* (B8.23–24) and *introjects* (B4; B16.4) the continuous *plenitude* of abstract substance.

Note, finally, the reasons for rejecting individual property as the greatness on which *bhūman* is based: the items of property listed are 'all based on each other,' whereas true *bhūman* extends over this whole world. This expresses the truth that, after the advent of a universal measure of value which is also a universal means of exchange, the value of each item of property remains based on the value of other items, and only (monetary) value itself is inherently universal. Monetary value seems to acquire its true being – fundamental and transcendent – only if universal, both projected (onto the cosmos) and introjected. Individual property, however various or valuable, can never equal this transcendent universality of monetary value.[82]

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CHAPTER 9

Philosophy and the Daimonic in Plato

Robert Vinkesteijn

1 Introduction

The ancient Greek word *daimon* (δαίμων) is notoriously ambiguous and difficult to interpret. In Greek literature before Plato, it had such an exceptional range of meaning that it could refer to: a specific divinity; something divine in a more undetermined sense; fate or destiny in a general sense; some individual's particular fate or curse; a spirit of some kind, either vengeful or beneficial, haunting or guarding; a spirit in the sense of the soul of a deceased hero or important individual. Attempts at general definitions convey that daimon expresses the divine in as far as it actively plays a part in human life but remains unknown, and that its actions tend to transgress boundaries, between man and god or between the internal and the external.[1]

It is only appropriate, perhaps, that a word with such exceptional semantic potential comes to play an important role in the then newly established and innovative tradition of philosophy. It appears in some of the writings of the Presocratics, notably in Empedocles.[2] But it achieves full prominence as a philosophical category in Plato. He was to lend the category of the daimonic more specificity, although this specificity consists merely in its *being in between* (μεταξύ) the specified things: man and god, ignorance and wisdom,

1 For some of the classic discussions see: Wilamowitz (1959) 356–363; Burkert (1985) 179–181; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1990) 34–38; for an excellent recent overview, including further references, see Timotin (2012) 13–36. More specific definitions are generally dependent on the kind of writing we are concerned with; for instance, daimon could be said to have a more specific meaning in some tragedies, see Geisser (2002) on Aeschylus; Schlesier (1983) on Euripides; Winnington-Ingram (1980) 173 ff. on Sophocles.

2 There is the famous fragment of Heraclitus, ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων, see Kahn (1979) *Fr.* CXIV and commentary; in Parmenides we find mention of a daimon in D4 and D14b ed. Laks and Most, which may or may not be identified with the goddess of his poem; with Empedocles' 'wandering daimon' we find many Platonic themes anticipated: it seems that the being of the daimon is the result of something gone wrong, and restoration must be sought through the acquisition of knowledge under the aegis of love. See D4–20 (particularly D10), D38–40, 51–3, 73–77, 149, and R47–55 ed. Laks and Most; See Detienne (1963) and, building on his work, Jensen (1966) on demonology in Pythagoreanism.

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self and world. It becomes, as it were, the name for the space philosophy is supposed to traverse. One could say that the philosophical life, for Plato in particular and for much of Greek philosophy in general, consisted in bridging the gap between the self and the divine. That is to say, in transforming the self and its actions into something more than it is, into something divine. Bridging this gap between the self and the divine, also means bridging the gap between the particularity of the self and the rest of the world, the world which is conceived to be structured according to or by the divine. The daimon is the bridger of this gap, in Plato, as we shall see. The word 'daimon' comes to expresses the 'paradox of moral life' that is at the heart of the newly established adventure called philosophy: it expresses that the human self is something more than merely itself – that it is simultaneously itself and something more divine, transcending the self.[3] As such, it is also the key to its potential for becoming a better, more beautiful being, which is what everything seems to be all about, for those ancient philosophers, in any case.

In this chapter, I set out the way in which Plato actualizes the philosophical potential of the term daimon, in three different but related ways.[4] I start with an analysis of Socrates' daimonic sign and the role it played in his choice for the philosophical life. From there I move on to the depiction of Socrates as a daimonic man, and the mediating daimon of the *Symposium*. Third, I discuss the identification of the rational part of our soul with a daimon in the *Timaeus*. Finally, I present some concluding remarks.

2 Socrates' Daimonic Sign

In Plato's work, the daimonic is something having to do with the practice of philosophy from the very start, because of Socrates' so-called daimonic sign.[5]

3 Hadot (1998) 124.

4 I do not intend this essay to be exhaustive, there is more to say on the daimonic in Plato, particularly on the notion of the ruler as a daimon or daimonic man; see Timotin (2012) 62 on this theme and its roots in Hesiod.

5 There also was already, to some extent at least, a notion of the daimon as a mediator, in the Pythagorean tradition. It seems likely that Plato's account in the *Symposium*, in any case, is influenced by this tradition. Whether the same could be said for Socrates' daimonic sign, is more difficult to determine (partly because it seems to go back to Socrates, the historical figure, rather than merely to Plato's depiction of Socrates). See Detienne (1963) and Jensen (1966) on the Pythagorean tradition; Sfameni Gasparro (1997) on the daimon in traditional Greek religion; Timotin (2012) chapter 2 for an overview of precedents for the Platonic *daimon* in general.

Much has been written on this peculiar phenomenon, so it will suffice to reiterate the essentials here.[6] If the current, tentative dating of Plato's work is more or less correct, the first appearances of this sign are found in the *Eutyphro* and *Apology*, in the context of Socrates' indictment and defence.[7] It is clear that the indictment of Meletus refers to it, as Socrates himself points out:

> τούτου δὲ αἴτιόν ἐστιν ὃ ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ πολλάκις ἀκηκόατε πολλαχοῦ λέγοντος, ὅτι μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίγνεται, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ἐπικωμῳδῶν Μέλητος ἐγράψατο. (Pl. *Ap*. 31c7–d2)
>
> You have often and on many occasions heard me explaining the reason for this, namely that something divine and daimonic appears to me, which Meletus also describes in his indictment, ridiculing it.[8]

Socrates had earlier set forth the indictment as follows:

> Σωκράτη φησὶν ἀδικεῖν τούς τε νέους διαφθείροντα καὶ θεοὺς οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα, ἕτερα δὲ δαιμόνια καινά. (Pl. *Ap*. 24b8–c1)
>
> [it] states that Socrates violates the law, because he corrupts the youth and does not acknowledge the gods that the city acknowledges, but other, new daimonic powers instead.

Here, it seems there are two different accusations: (1) Socrates corrupts the youth, and (2) he does not acknowledge the gods of the city, but rather introduces new daimonic powers. In the *Euthyphro*, however, it is suggested that the two are related, namely that Socrates corrupts the youth *by* introducing new daimonic powers:

> ΕΥΘ. … καί μοι λέγε, τί καὶ ποιοῦντά σέ φησι διαφθείρειν τοῦς νέους;
> ΣΩ. Ἄτοπα, ὦ θαυμάσιε, ὡς οὕτω γ' ἀκοῦσαι. φησὶ γάρ με ποιητὴν εἶναι θεῶν,

6 See particularly: Hoffmann (1985–1986); Motte (1987); Smith and Woodruff (2000), chapter 10, which provides a rather technical, but informative discussion between Vlastos, Smith, Brickhouse and McPherran from around 1990; the edition by Destrée and Smith (2005) devoted entirely to the 'divine' sign, of which Destrée's chapter is particularly insightful, showing the relevance of the sign for Socrates' philosophical way of life; Long (2006); Timotin (2012) 52 ff.

7 For the dating, see Brandwood (1992) 90–120; and Cooper (1997).

8 Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own, but I have in many cases found the translations in Cooper (1997) very helpful.

καὶ ὡς καινοὺς ποιοῦντα θεοὺς τοὺς δ' ἀρχαίους οὐ νομίζοντα ἐγράψατο τούτων αὐτῶν ἕνεκα, ὥς φησιν.
ΕΥΘ. Μανθάνω, ὦ Σώκρατες· ὅτι δὴ σὺ τὸ δαιμόνιον φῂς σαυτῷ ἑκάστοτε γίγνεσθαι. (Pl. *Euthphr*. 3a8–b6)

Euthyphro: … Tell me, what does he say you do to corrupt the young?
Socrates: Strange things, to hear him tell it, for he says that I am a maker of gods, and on the ground that I create new gods while not believing in the old gods, he has indicted me for their sake, as he puts it.
Euthyphro: I understand, Socrates. This is because you say that the divine sign keeps coming to you. (transl. Gruber)

From this, we can gather that, according to Plato's work, Socrates was indicted, and subsequently sentenced to death, because of his controversial preoccupation with some daimonic phenomenon. Of course, the accusation of a form of impiety towards the divine is a tried and tested formula, and may just have been the best way to get Socrates convicted, rather than the actual problem anybody had with Socrates. Indeed, in the *Apology* Socrates says that there had already been a prolonged slander campaign against him, on which his accusers draw for their current accusation.[9] This campaign is due to a misunderstanding of his philosophical mission, as Socrates explains, given to him by the oracle of Delphi. Whereas Socrates himself interprets his famous questioning as a gift of Apollo to the Athenians, the gift of knowing that one does not know, his accusers rather think that arrogance, sophistry and atheism belie his questioning. It seems, then, that the real problem is the nuisance Socrates caused because of his conviction that 'the unexamined life is not worth living.'[10] However, it would be short-sighted to see these two, the nuisance of philosophical questioning and the appeal to a daimonic phenomenon, merely as true cause and outward pretext of Socrates' trial respectively. As has been shown, they have a much more intricate relationship: this daimonic phenomenon plays an important role in Socrates' choice for and persistence in the philosophical life.[11]

As Socrates explains, still in the *Apology*, the daimonic sign prevented him from taking part in politics:

9 Pl. *Ap*. 18a ff.

10 Pl. *Ap*. 38a5–6. Note that I am not concerned here with the real motives of the historical figures who indicted Socrates, but with the way this story and the role of the daimonic sign therein, is developed by Plato.

11 See particularly Destrée (2005) on this point.

> τούτου δὲ αἴτιόν ἐστιν ὃ ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ πολλάκις ἀκηκόατε πολλαχοῦ λέγοντος, ὅτι μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίγνεται, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ἐπικωμῳδῶν Μέλητος ἐγράψατο. ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξάμενον, φωνή τις γιγνομένη, ἣ ὅταν γένηται, ἀεὶ ἀποτρέπει με τοῦτο ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὔποτε. τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὅ μοι ἐναντιοῦνται τὰ πολιτικὰ πράττειν, καὶ παγκάλως γέ μοι δοκεῖ ἐναντιοῦσάι.' (Pl. *Ap*. 31c4–d6)
>
> But you have often and on many occasions heard me explaining the reason for this, namely that something divine and daimonic appears to me, which Meletus also describes in his indictment, ridiculing it. This started when I was a child, some kind of voice appears, and whenever it does, it always turns me away from what I am about to do, but it never encourages me [to do anything]. This is what prevented me to take part in politics, and I think it was quite right to do so.

It was right, says Socrates, because the philosophical life, being concerned with justice, cannot be maintained in a public function – one would not survive for long.[12] As Socrates explains in this passage, the sign is apotreptic, it deters him from certain things. In this case, it deters him from involving himself in public affairs. As such, it seems to be coordinated with Socrates' philosophical mission as he had explained it earlier. Sanctioned by the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, he is to go around questioning people's alleged wisdom, stirring up the city like a gadfly stinging a sluggish horse.[13] Apparently, his daimonic sign made sure that he did not ruin his potentially philosophical life prematurely by becoming politically active. And indeed, scholars have suggested that Apollo must be the source of Socrates' daimonic sign – a suggestion that has some plausibility, although the text is too vague about this to simply accept it.[14] The link between the daimonic sign and Socrates' philosophical mission, as well as the possible role of Apollo therein, is no invention of modern scholarship, but can already be found in Proclus. For Proclus, the apotreptic quality of the sign corresponds to Apollo's *kathartic* aspect. It purifies Socrates by deterring him from the realm of becoming, rather keeping him focused on philosophical contemplation.[15] For Socrates to become a philosopher, some rupture with a normal course of life needed to occur.

12 Pl. *Ap*. 31c–33b.
13 Pl. *Ap*. 21a ff.
14 Cf. Burnyeat (1997); Reeve (2000); Sedley (2004) 84 ff.
15 Procl. *in Alc*. 82–83.

The daimonic sign also supports Socrates' decision to go to court and face the consequences of his choice for the philosophical life (despite the apparent possibility, as we gather from the *Crito*, to do otherwise):

> ἡ γὰρ εἰωθυῖά μοι μαντικὴ ἡ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ παντὶ πυκνὴ ἀεὶ ἦν καὶ πάνυ ἐπὶ σμικροῖς ἐναντιουμένη, εἴ τι μέλλοιμι μὴ ὀρθῶς πράξειν… ἐμοὶ δὲ οὔτε ἐξιόντι ἔωθεν οἴκοθεν ἠναντιώθη τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σημεῖον, οὔτε ἡνίκα ἀνέβαινον ἐνταυθοῖ ἐπὶ τὸ δικαστήριον, οὔτε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ οὐδαμοῦ μέλλοντί τι ἐρεῖν… (Pl. *Ap*. 40a4–b3)
>
> For at all previous times and on many occasions my customary prophetic [voice], the daimonic one, always opposed me even in small matters, when I was about to do something that was not right … but the sign of the god did not oppose me this morning when I left my home, nor when I came here into court, nor at any time when I was about to say something during my speech…

From this absence of the daimonic phenomenon, Socrates deduces approval: it must be as it should then, what is happening. He continues to hypothesize that it may be a good thing for him to die, or even that death in general may be a good thing. It is important to realize that Socrates is here, while he is speaking on death, directly addressing his friends. He is always portrayed by Plato as being concerned with his young friends' well-being, making sure that they do not despair about his death but stay on track to live a philosophical life. This is a central theme in the *Phaedo*, which picks up the story of Socrates' trial from the *Apology*, and emphasizes the need to adopt some uncertain beliefs about the immortality of the soul, because they may have a positive impact on one's ability to live a philosophical life.[16] On a literal reading, in any case, the idea that the daimonic sign approves of Socrates' trial because death is better than life strikes me as hopelessly banal. A more interesting interpretation – though one that Socrates does not bring forth himself – would be that the daimonic sign did not oppose him, not because death in general is better than life, but because *his* death is the inherent consequence of *his commitment* to the philosophical life ('the unexamined life is not worth living'), as he had already explained to the jury himself. As such, his trial and death is the proper end of his life, and the establishment, as we shall see, of the philosophical life as a possible life-model.

16 Pl. *Phd*. 114d1–115a6.

But first, let us summarize our findings from the *Eutyphro* and *Apology*, and have a look at the other places in Plato's work where the daimonic sign appears.

Socrates' appeal to a daimonic phenomenon was, according to Plato's testimony, the main reason for his trial and subsequent death. It is something that has accompanied him throughout his life, appearing to him since his childhood. It manifests itself to him as a voice (φωνή).[17] It acts apotreptically, and deters him from certain actions or decisions. Notably, it deterred him from getting involved in politics, which would have been irreconcilable with his philosophical life. Finally, it consented to his trial and death.

These characteristics agree with other passages in Plato's work concerned with the daimonic sign. In the *Euthydemus* (272e2–4), it appears to Socrates just as he is about to leave the Lyceum. Socrates obeys the sign, without question, and sits back down. It quickly becomes clear why it appeared: two figures cunning in sophistry, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, come in with a following of young students, and claim to be able to teach knowledge of virtue faster and better than anyone else. Socrates, of course, sets them straight in front of their audience, adhering to his philosophical task as he describes it in the *Apology*.

In book VI of the *Republic* (496a11–c5), Socrates and Adeimantus discuss the type of person suitable for becoming a philosopher. Not only must they be of noble and talented nature, but they also need some form of circumstantial support: there must be something that prevents them from being drawn into public life. The examples Socrates gives include that of someone who is exiled, someone who is living in a small town and disdains the affairs of the city, or someone who's physical illness makes them unsuitable for political affairs. What about Socrates himself, one might ask at this point, how did his circumstances help him to live the philosophical life? Socrates answers as follows:

> τὸ δ' ἡμέτερον οὐκ ἄξιον λέγειν, τὸ δαιμόνιον σημεῖον· ἢ γάρ πού τινι ἄλλῳ ἢ οὐδενὶ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν γέγονεν. (Pl. *R.* 496c3–5)
>
> My own case is not worth mentioning, my daimonic sign: for it has hardly appeared, as it seems to me, to anyone before me.

With the help of this passage, we can see more clearly what was already suggested in the *Apology*. Socrates' philosophical life and his appeal to some

17 Of course, Socrates also calls it a σημεῖον, which has predominantly (though not exclusively) visual connotations. In any case, it cannot involve any of the senses in a straightforward way, as it would then have been perceived by others as well. On this issue, cf. Long (2006); Roskam (2014).

daimonic phenomenon are related, as the latter is a condition for the former. Without this daimonic sign, says Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*, this very Socrates, our philosophical archetype, would not have been able to live the philosophical life.

In the *Theaetetus* (150b6–151a4), Socrates famously describes his philosophical engagement with others as an art of midwifery.[18] He helps others give birth to their wisdom, but does not provide them with any wisdom of his own. Occasionally, one of the youngsters he associates with becomes arrogant, and leaves him, thinking that they can improve their souls without further guidance. When these persons wise up and attempt to come back to Socrates' midwifery, it is the daimonic sign that determines whether Socrates continues to work with them or not.[19] This passage contains many echoes of the *Apology*, and expands the understanding of Socrates' philosophical activity as a service to Apollo, with the daimonic sign as his aid.

Finally, there is a remarkable passage in the *Phaedrus*. Socrates has just delivered his ode to Eros, love, to his companion Phaedrus and is about to go back to the city, when the sign appears.[20] From its appearance, Socrates derives that the ode was inappropriate and that he should purify himself by delivering a new and better ode. He had presented Eros in a vulgar way, as a form of base desire opposed to reason. In his *Palinode*, as it is called, Socrates rather develops a philosophical notion of love as the memory of and longing for the form of beauty, which manifests itself in mutual admiration and education between philosophically inclined souls. Needless to say, this idea of Eros reminds of the *daimon* Eros from the *Symposium*, and it is tempting to see the appearance of the daimonic sign in the *Phaedrus* as a kind of point of transition between the conceptions of the daimonic as an apotreptic sign (in Plato's earlier work and in passages concerned with Socrates' life in particular) and a stimulating force (in the *Symposium*). After all, the sign does not merely function in an apotreptic manner in the *Phaedrus*, it does not merely not allow Socrates to leave (οὐκ ἐᾷ ἀπιέναι), but it does not allow him to leave *before he has purified himself* (πρὶν ἂν ἀφοσιώσωμαι) by giving an inspired *Palinode*.[21] After having received the sign, Socrates calls Phaedrus 'divine' (θεῖός) and 'truly amazing' (ἀτεχνῶς θαυμάσιος). As opposed to when he delivered his earlier speech, Socrates has become truly inspired now. The sign showed him that the previous ode to Eros was lacking, by deterring him from leaving their

18 See Sedley (2004) for a brilliant analysis of the *Theaetetus*, with 84 ff. particularly on the daimonic sign.

19 Pl. *Tht*. 151a3–5.

20 Pl. *Phdr*. 242b8–c3.

21 *Ibid*.

idyllic place away from the city, making him stay with the 'divine' Phaedrus to engage in philosophical conversation. After the appearance of the daimonic sign, Socrates has become inspired in a way that prefigures the notion of love as divine inspiration he is about to develop.

3 The Guardian-Daimon and Socrates as Paradigm

Socrates, who is to become the archetype of the philosopher, is a philosopher, according to our most important testimony, *because he experienced some daimonic phenomenon*. According to Plato's writings, at least, it is questionable whether the philosophical tradition as we know it would have come to be at all, if it were not for this daimonic phenomenon. So, if we have any interest in the philosophical tradition at all, we should be asking ourselves, what is this daimonic something? Assuming we are not concerned with mere hallucinations here, as Nietzsche would have it, what is the meaning of this sign?[22]

The language used by Plato to describe it is vague. Among other things it is called 'something divine and daimonic' (θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον), probably the vaguest possible phrase to describe something supra-human in ancient Greek. It is also referred to as a voice (φωνή) and a sign (σημεῖον), or simply as το δαιμόνιον, which can be read as a noun, meaning something like 'the daimonic something,' or as an adiective with ellipsis of σημεῖον. One way to explain this vagueness on Plato's part, is simply to understand the phenomenon as something that was actually vague to Socrates himself and to his followers. In effect, it guides him in living the philosophical life, by intervening or not intervening, that much is clear, but what it is itself, where it comes from and why it aids him to live the philosophical life, could well have been as unclear to Socrates and Plato as it is to us.

In the *Apology*, Socrates tells us that 'the god'[23] made him a model (παράδειγμα) of human wisdom. He is the first to grasp the tragic situation of the human intellect, by looking out beyond the limitations of his own knowledge. That is to say, he sees his knowledge appear against an infinite background, that of perfect or complete knowledge, so that his knowledge – and that of his fellow-citizens – appears to him as *human*, as opposed to divine. Socratic *aporia* is the rupture in coinciding with oneself, and therefore it is the cathartic prerequisite for the recognition of this gap between

22 Nietzsche (1976) 4.

23 See Burnyeat (1997), for an excellent discussion of this issue.

the human and the divine. Before this recognition, there is no philosophy. Socrates' life, in other words, is the paradigm, the very model of the philosophical life. In the *Republic*'s Myth of Er, we are told that each soul, before being incarnated again, must choose from among the models of lives (βίων παραδείγματα) provided by Lachesis, after which a daimon is assigned to them as the guardian of their chosen life and fulfiller of their choice.[24] So, one might say, this is how we understand Socrates' *daimonion*: he chose a philosophical life-model, and it is the guardian of this model, it is his daimon. This interpretation, however, faces two major problems. The first is philological: we would completely neglect the difference between what is called, in Plato's work, δαίμων and δαιμόνιον. It has long been acknowledged in scholarship that this is simply unacceptable.[25] The second problem is of more philosophical nature: how could Socrates chose a philosophical life-model? There was no one like him before him. As he says in the *Republic*: the daimonic sign had not appeared to others before him. In other words, Socrates *is* the archetype, the paradigm. This may be a fruitful way of understanding the vagueness of Socrates' daimonic sign: after the death of Socrates, it becomes possible to choose the philosophical life as a life-model – in fact, in the *Apology* Socrates predicts that many young people will do so after his death[26] – but Socrates' very life itself, *is* the establishment of this possibility. Therefore, for Socrates himself, there is not yet the option of choosing a full-blown philosophical life-model with accompanying *daimon* guarding it. He is guided by something that is still less elaborated, by something less determined that precedes the guardian of the philosophical life-model, because his life is the very constitution of this model. He is accompanied by a vague daimonic something that belongs to him uniquely, and that can become the daimon of the philosophical life after him, because he has shown the way to those youngsters who can now become philosophers like him. Perhaps, we could even say that this is why the daimonic sign did not deter Socrates from facing the Athenian jury that was

24 Pl. *R.* 620d–e; cf. also Pl. *Phd.* 107d5 f. and 113d1 f., where it concerns the guidance after death.

25 See Destrée (2005) 63.

26 Pl. *Ap.* 39d: "There will be more people to test you, whom I now held back, but you did not notice it. They will be more difficult to deal with as they will be younger and you will resent them more. You are wrong if you believe that by killing people you will prevent anyone from reproaching you for not living in the right way. To escape such tests is neither possible nor good, but it is best and easiest not to discredit others but to prepare oneself to be as good as possible. With this prophecy to you who convicted me, I part from you." (transl. Grube).

to sentence him to death: it only truly came to be itself, when Socrates died a martyr for philosophy.

And in fact, when Plato develops the notion of the philosophical *daimon* further in the *Symposium*, he does so with continuous reference to Socrates' life and character.

4 Socratic Atopia and the Daimon as in Between

As is well-known, in the *Symposium*, the daimon is defined as a being that is in between (μεταξύ) man and god, mediating between the two.[27] This general definition of the daimon follows from Diotima's consideration of Eros, love, who is portrayed as the philosophical love for the good and the beautiful.[28] Eros, in turn, is also identified with Socrates, in an ongoing comparison across Diotima's speech on Eros and Alcibiades' speech on Socrates. Both are poor, ugly, shoeless and used to spending the night outside;[29] both are also resourceful schemers capable of enchanting others.[30] These complementary aspects of lack and resourcefulness are mythologically expressed in Eros' heritage from Penia, 'lack' or 'poverty' and Poros, 'way' or 'resource.' They are mirrored in Socrates' professed lack of knowledge, on the one hand, and his resourcefulness in argument as well his capacity to amaze and inspire wonder, on the other.[31] The daimon moves and communicates between man and god, as Diotima explains, and Socrates presented himself as working in the service of 'the god,' as a gift to the city, in the *Apology*.[32] Socrates is called a *daimonic man* by Alcibiades, echoing Diotima's previous description of the daimonic man as one who is wise about the communication between the human and

27 See particularly Pl. *Smp.* 202d13–203a8; the classic discussion of this subject is Robin (1964).

28 Pl. *Smp.* 204b ff.

29 For Eros Pl. *Smp.* 203c5 ff.; for Socrates: on his poverty Pl. *Ap.* 31c2–3; on his ugliness Pl. *Tht.* 143e8–9, and also the comparison with a satyr in *Smp.* 221d1; on him being shoeless: *Smp.* 220b6–7; and on him spending the night outside: *Smp.* 220c2 ff.

30 For Eros Pl. *Smp.* 203d; for Socrates especially Alcibiades' speech 215c f., 222b.

31 This quality of being amazing or causing wonder is everywhere in Alcibiades' speech on Socrates: 213e2, 215b8, 216c7, 217a1, 219c1, 220a4, 220a7, 220c6, 221c3, 221c6.

32 Pl. *Ap.* 22e6–23a5 particularly, cf. also *Ap.* 22a4: … ζητοῦντι κατὰ τὸν θεόν …; 23b5: … ζητῶ καὶ ἐρευνῶ κατὰ τὸν θεὸν …; 23b7: … τῷ θεῷ βοηθῶν ἐνδείκνυμαι ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι σοφός. 30a5–7: ταῦτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεός, εὖ ἴστε, καὶ ἐγὼ οἴομαι οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μεῖζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν. 33c4: ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἐγώ φημι, προστέτακται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πράττειν …; Socrates as gift of "the god": *Ap.* 30d9 f.: τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δόσιν ὑμῖν; 31b: ὅτι δ' ἐγὼ τυγχάνω ὢν τοιοῦτος οἷος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ πόλει δεδόσθαι.

the divine.[33] Both Socrates and Eros reside in between wisdom and ignorance: they are not wise, but because they realise what they *lack*, they long for what they miss, and are therefore not ignorant either.

This notion of a *lack* is central in the *Symposium*, or, to put it in Platonic terms: *aporia* is a condition for Eros:

> αὐτὸ γὰρ τοῦτό ἐστι χαλεπὸν ἀμαθία, τὸ μὴ ὄντα καλὸν κἀγαθὸν μηδὲ φρόνιμον δοκεῖν αὑτῷ ἱκανόν. (Pl. *Smp*. 204a4–6)
>
> For this is really difficult about ignorance: while you *are* not beautiful, good or intelligent, you *seem* to be sufficient to yourself.

In order to develop the daimonic desire for the divine, and the subsequent potential for producing beautiful thoughts and actions, one must first experience one's imperfection: the realization of *not* being good and wise, is a condition for becoming more so. This is the realization Alcibiades has because of Socrates. He likens Socrates to the satyr Marsyas, because of his ability to cast a spell on people, and complains – with clear reference to the *Apology* – that 'this Marsyas here often makes me feel like this, so that it appears to me that *my life is not worth living*.'[34] The problem with Alcibiades, though, is that he does not change his life, he lacks the resolve to become a philosopher, perhaps because he is, after all, a politician. He experiences the worthlessness of his life when he is around the daimonic Socrates, but the experience of this lack of worth does not make him strive for something better, he simply continues his vanity and feels shame when he sees Socrates again.[35]

This, then, is in a more positive sense the aim of Socrates' philosophical life: not merely to cause *aporia*, the awareness of lack, but to cause *aporia* in order to create space for Eros, the longing to fill the lack by striving for the truly beautiful and good, divine wisdom. Not merely, if you like, to deter from ignorance, but also and at the same time to inspire towards knowing and producing something more akin to the divine. Socrates 'negative' philosophical mission of causing *aporia* was guarded and validated by his apotreptic daimonic sign, and the subsequent 'positive' possibility of striving for what one has now experienced as lacking, is portrayed as daimonic as well. This is not

33 Pl. *Smp*. 219c; in Diotima's speech 203a5.

34 Pl. *Smp*. 215e7–216a2.

35 As he says in 216b–c: he does feel like Socrates is right, and he feels ashamed about his life, but the moment he leaves Socrates' company, he caves in to his 'desire to please the crowd.' He is not aloof enough to be a philosopher.

coincidental, as should be clear by now, the daimonic is the philosophical category *par excellence* in Plato. But besides the characteristics of lacking and being resourceful, there is another important aspect to the 'daimonic identity' shared by Eros and Socrates: strangeness.

The recurrent term here is ἀτοπία, meaning something like oddness or extraordinariness. Taken literally, it points to a being out of place. When Socrates remains standing outside of Agathon's house, alone, insensitive to the repeated calls of Agathon's slaves to come in and join the feast with the others, Agathon responds: ἄτοπόν, "how strange."[36] Aristodemus explains to him that this is Socrates' custom (ἔθος), and, indeed, Alcibiades later relates how Socrates, during a military expedition, once astounded the other soldiers by standing outside thinking, on the same spot, for an entire day and night.[37] It is customary for Socrates to be strange, or extraordinary, so we learn. Alcibiades' speech is, explicitly, an account of Socrates' *atopia*,[38] and he attributes a series of extraordinary features to him: he never gets drunk no matter how much he drinks, he is exceptionally brave in battle, he is completely insensitive to the formidable physical temptation offered by Alcibiades' beauty, and he seems entirely unbothered by cold. These features have something in common: they show Socrates as unaffected by what goes on around him and with his body. As with the daimonic sign, we should not take this as something that simply happens to be characteristic of Socrates, who also happens to be a philosopher. Socrates is the archetype of the philosopher, so what is attributed to him is never just attributed to him, but to the philosopher as such. Indeed, in other places in Plato's work, this kind of detached aloofness is considered to be characteristic of the philosopher as such:

> … ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι τὸ σῶμα μόνον ἐν τῇ πόλει κεῖται αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιδημεῖ, ἡ δὲ διάνοια, ταῦτα πάντα ἡγησαμένη σμικρὰ καὶ οὐδέν, ἀτιμάσασα πανταχῇ πέτεται …[39]
>
> … but in truth only his body resides and lives in the city, while his mind, having understood that all these things are petty and worthless, scorns them and flies off in all directions …

36 Pl. *Smp.* 175a10; it is not coincidental that Agathon expresses himself in this way, just as it is not coincidental that, a few lines earlier, Aristodemus says that he too 'wonders' (θαυμάζω) where Socrates is: here we have, in the introduction of the *Symposium*, a demonstration of some of Socrates' key qualities as a philosopher – his strangeness and his ability to cause wonder – and a recognition of them from the other characters.

37 Pl. *Smp.* 220c3–d5.

38 Pl. *Smp.* 215a2–3; he returns to this theme in the conclusion of his speech, 221d1–2.

39 Pl. *Tht.* 173e1–4.

Socrates, in this passage, continues to explain that the philosopher is concerned with escaping from earth to heaven, or, in other words: 'becoming as like god as possible.'[40] How does one become like god? By becoming virtuous and wise; that is to say, by acquiring more of the qualities to which the philosopher strives after having learned of their own imperfection.

Likewise, in the *Phaedrus*, the philosopher is depicted as being in between the human and the divine:

> ἐξιστάμενος δὲ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων σπουδασμάτων καὶ πρὸς τῷ θείῳ γιγνόμενος, νουθετεῖται μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ὡς παρακινῶν, ἐνθουσιάζων δὲ λέληθεν τοὺς πολλούς. (Pl. *Phdr*. 249c8–d3)
>
> … standing outside of human concerns and becoming close to the divine, he is reproached by the many as being outside of his senses, but his divine inspiration escapes their notice.

The *atopia* of the philosopher must be taken in the rather literal sense of being out of place. Socrates is not at home in the world of men, like the philosopher returning to the cave, but neither can he simply dwell in the divine realm – he remains a man, after all. Socrates is strange, extraordinary, out of place, because he is μεταξύ, in between, like the daimon. He is, as Alcibiades rightly observed, a *daimonic man*. Again, this applies not only to Socrates, but to the philosopher as such. What is more, since the philosophical life – as we shall see – is the only proper life for a human being, it applies to the human being as such: fully becoming a human being means becoming daimonic.

But why, one might ask, is it fitting that we become daimonic? Why is it, that our development must start with the experience of a lack? In other words, why are we imperfect beings to begin with? To answer these questions, we must look at yet another way in which Plato develops the notion of daimon, in his *Timaeus*.

5 The Self as Daimon

Socrates' daimonic sign was a vague phenomenon, coming to Socrates from some divine realm, guiding him in the establishment of the philosophical life-model. It supported Socrates in his quest to make the Athenians aware of their lack of wisdom, it created the possibility of philosophy. The daimon in the

40 Pl. *Tht*. 176b1–2.

Symposium, on the other hand, still departs from the figure of Socrates, but is also something each of us can find within ourselves, as our desire for becoming something more than what we are, something more beautiful, virtuous and wise. In the *Timaeus*, finally, our very own rational soul is depicted as a daimon:

> τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ' ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἴδους διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ τῇδε, ὡς ἄρα αὐτὸ δαίμονα θεὸς ἑκάστῳ δέδωκεν, τοῦτο ὃ δή φαμεν οἰκεῖν μὲν ἡμῶν ἐπ' ἄκρῳ τῷ σώματι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ συγγένειαν ἀπὸ γῆς ἡμᾶς αἴρειν ὡς ὄντας φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον, ὀρθότατα λέγοντες· ἐκεῖθεν γάρ, ὅθεν ἡ πρώτη τῆς ψυχῆς γένεσις ἔφυ, τὸ θεῖον τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ῥίζαν ἡμῶν ἀνακρεμαννὺν ὀρθοῖ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα. (Pl. *Ti.* 90a2 f.)
>
> We must keep the following in mind concerning the supreme part of our soul: that god has given it to each of us as our daimon. It is this part, of course, of which we said that it lives in the top of our bodies and that it raises us up away from earth towards what is akin to it in heaven, as if we are plants not of the earth, but of heaven. And it is most correct to say this, for it is from here, where the original becoming of our soul took place, that the divine suspends our head and root and thus keeps our whole body straight.

The daimonic part of our soul is a gift from god to each of us, a part of the divine in man. This part is naturally inclined to move towards its place of origin, stretching out the human being between earth and heaven. Thus, we now learn, the daimonic is a natural part of the human being, because the human being itself is in between, not completely at home on the earth, nor in heaven. Apparently, it is custom for the human being, as for Socrates, to be out of place, to be strange. But with Socrates we could see what was strange about him, Alcibiades vividly described his extraordinary features. How are human beings as such strange?

As Timaeus had explained earlier, this *daimon* is the only part of us that is actually made by the so-called demiurge (δημιουργός), the god who created the universe, including the other gods. This creative god makes our *daimon* from the same stuff (albeit somewhat less perfectly mixed) from which he made the soul of the whole universe (τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ψυχὴν), and then orders the lesser gods to finish the job and weave it into the mortal part of us. That is to say, we are the only beings in this universe that take part in both mortality and immortality – this is what makes us strange. Like the daimon of the *Symposium*, we are in between mortal and immortal, partly divine and partly of the earth. The Platonic philosophical project consists in realizing that this is what we are and,

following this realization, devoting ourselves to the development of our divine part as completely as possible.

Before the human being is completed by the lesser gods and planted into a body, the demiurge assigns each of the *daimon*-souls to a star, and shows them the nature of the universe. The natural desire of this better part of our soul is to return, after being incarnated, to this condition of knowing the entire universe. Therefore, the supreme goal and purpose (τέλος) of the human being, so Timaeus tells us, is to take good care of one's daimon and provide it with its proper nourishment, that is to say, to devote one's life to learning.[41] This implies that happiness and fulfilment can only be found in the philosophical life, the *vita contemplativa*. If that might seem radical, Plato's work has been radical all along – remember Socrates' words in the *Apology*, echoed by Alcibiades in the *Symposium*: 'the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being.'[42]

Philosophy is the only option, because the human being is daimonic by nature. In as far as we are rational, we do not coincide with ourselves, but desire to go beyond ourselves, to 'fly off in all directions' and regain, noetically, the unity that we once belonged to by virtue of our substance:

> τῷ δ' ἐν ἡμῖν θείῳ συγγενεῖς εἰσιν κινήσεις αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις καὶ περιφοραί· ταύταις δὴ συνεπόμενον ἕκαστον δεῖ, τὰς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ διεφθαρμένας ἡμῶν περιόδους ἐξορθοῦντα διὰ τὸ καταμανθάνειν τὰς τοῦ παντὸς ἁρμονίας τε καὶ περιφοράς, τῷ κατανοουμένῳ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξομοιῶσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν, ὁμοιώσαντα δὲ τέλος ἔχειν τοῦ προτεθέντος ἀνθρώποις ὑπὸ θεῶν ἀρίστου βίου πρός τε τὸν παρόντα καὶ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον. (Pl. *Ti.* 90c7–d7)

> And the motions that are akin to the divine within us are the thoughts and circular motions of the whole universe. Each of us must, indeed, follow these, and correct the cyclical movements in our heads that were ruined with our birth, by studying the framework and revolutions of the whole universe, assimilating the thinker with what is thought, as in our original nature. When this assimilation is done, we will have reached the goal set out for human beings by the gods, the best life present to us now and in the time after.

41 Sedley has provided seminal discussions of this ideal in the *Timaeus* and elsewhere (1997, 1999, 2017), to which the present analysis is strongly indebted; see also Berg (2003) for the later Neoplatonic interpretation of this ideal.

42 Pl. *Ap.* 38a5–6; *Smp.* 216a1–2.

Again, we are not concerned here with one among a range of various possibilities to fulfil human potential. This is the only form of existence that makes actual sense for a human being. What we are, essentially, is a miniature version of the world-soul set in a complex composite structure hindering our proper movements. If we do not free ourselves of our identification with this complex composite structure, realize what we are lacking in our current state, and attempt a life aimed solely at the care for our daimon, we will be unhappy. This life is the life of contemplation.[43] So, this is why we must first experience a lack and why we are imperfect beings: for Plato, what we really are, is only daimon, only the potential for returning to what we were through the noetic repetition of everything.

That is why daimon must be taken, after all, as more than merely 'an elevated name for each person's governing or rational faculty.'[44] Saying that the rational part of our soul is a daimon differs from merely saying that we have a rational part in our soul: 'we are daimon,' means that we are constituted in such a way that we are more than ourselves. It expresses not merely that we have a faculty of thought, but that thinking is the way for us to become what we ought to have been all along. This is brought out beautifully by Plotinus, in his analysis of Eros, in *Enneads* III.5. He understands the love of the soul of the entire universe as a god, that permanently attaches it to the Good, not lacking it at any time. But at the level of the individual soul, which is mixed with matter, this permanent attachment is not given. Hence, the love of this individual soul, experiencing a lack and striving for something lost, should be considered daimonic.

6 Concluding Remarks

It is clear that the category of the daimonic is of crucial import in Plato. It is also clear that there is some development of the notion going on in his work: it is tempting to see, based on the current, tentative dating of Plato's works, tendencies of *interiorization* (from a voice or sign, possibly coming from a god, that simply manifests itself to Socrates, to our very own faculty of thought), *generalization* (from something that is peculiar to Socrates, as his daimonic sign and his extraordinary character and likeness to the daimon

43 In as far as there was any doubt about this, Sedley (2017) has settled it.

44 Long (2002) 164, to be fair: Long writes this on Chrysippus' daimon, in the context of his study of Epictetus.

Eros, to something that we all have, or even something that we all *are*), and *substantialization* (from the vague phenomenon of the daimonic sign, which indicates something but is completely unclear with regard to its own being, to the *daimon* as the most substantial part of the human being, the leading part of the soul dwelling in the head). These are all interesting developments, which show a sustained interest on Plato's part in the daimonic as a category of philosophical potential. And perhaps this in itself is, indeed, most important: the daimonic is an essential category for Plato's thinking *about philosophy and the philosophical life*. Whether it is about explaining why Socrates is a philosopher (*Apology, Republic*), or why anyone experiences a desire for wisdom at all (*Symposium*), or why happiness consists in the philosophical life (*Timaeus*), every time something daimonic is key in Plato's explanation.

As Plutarch observed, the daimonic plays an important role in mediating between the divine and the human.[45] But that is not all. Plato found in his notion of the daimonic a way to express the exceptional position of the human being in the cosmos, the same position that gives cause to the wonder that is the beginning of all philosophy:

> μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας, ἢ αὕτη, καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ τὴν Ἶριν Θαύμαντος ἔκγονον φήσας οὐ κακῶς γενεαλογεῖν. (Pl. *Tht.* 155d2–5)
>
> For this is the experience characteristic of a philosopher: this wondering. There is no other beginning of philosophy but this, and it appears like the man who declared Iris to be the child of Thaumas was no bad genealogist.

Iris, of course, is also a messenger between the human and the divine realms, as well as the rainbow, a bridge between earth and sky. It is the philosophical experience of wonder that gives birth to the daimonic possibility of ascension towards the heavens. It is notable that the only possible beginning of philosophy is said here to consist in a feeling or experience, a πάθος, rather than, say, a thought, an argument or even a question. From this we can also tell how, in Plato, the idea of the daimonic is not merely of 'metaphysical' import, something to bridge the gap between the human and the divine spheres – it is first and foremost a way to do justice to a very real and immediate human experience: the amazing fact that we, apparently as the only ones around, can relate

45 Plu. *De Def. Orac.* 415A.

to things, including ourselves, by thinking. This ability makes us potentially infinite, because it makes it possible for us to become everything, as we were when we were only daimon.[46] It also makes it so that we are, at least essentially, nothing in particular: becoming divine involves identifying *only* with our daimon.[47] This means abandoning – in as far as possible – one's physical existence, one's individual desires, interests, feelings and ambitions, even one's relations to others, which seem to all require the other parts of our soul, and becoming a kind of pure spectator of the universe.

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46 We could perhaps say that the notion of the daimon here expresses a general intuition of Greek philosophy, namely that we, or our soul, by virtue of its capacity for thought, is somehow infinite and capable of becoming everything. See, e.g., Heraclitus' aphorism about the depth of the soul (DK *Fr.* 45, XXXV Kahn), and Aristotle's remark that the "soul is in a way all things" (Arist. *De An.* 431b21–2).

47 See Sedley (2017).

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CHAPTER 10

Confusion (*Ekplêxis*) and Sympathy (*Sympatheia*): The Neoplatonist Proclus on the Aesthetics of Epiphany and Theurgic Union

Robbert M. van den Berg

One of the most intriguing works of late Antiquity is a book about the lives and times of the pagan Neoplatonists in late ancient Alexandria and Athens by Damascius, the last head of the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens. The book, which survives only in fragments, was entitled either *The Life of Isidore* or *The Philosophical History*. It is a rich source of information about the spirituality and religious practices of these last pagan philosophers, as the following fragment illustrates. It describes the impact that a certain statue of Aphrodite made on Damascius:

> T.1 *The author says he saw a statue of Aphrodite dedicated by Herodes the sophist.* Upon seeing it, I fell into a sweat because of amazement (*thambos*) and confusion (*ekplêxis*) and my soul was filled with such joy that I was quite unable to go back home. I went away several times only to return to that sight again. The sculptor has blended into it so much beauty – nothing sweet or sensual, but something dignified and virile: clad in armour and as if just returning from a victory, with an expression of joy. (Dam. *Isid. Fr.* 63A; ed./transl. Athanassiadi 1999, 171–173 slightly adapted)[1]

From Damascius' description, we may deduce that he believed to have encountered an animated statue and hence experienced an epiphany. As already Henk Versnel noted in a seminal article on this topic, the ancient Greeks regarded any form of divine presence (*parousia*, παρουσία) as an epi-

1 Dam. *Isid. Fr.* 63A: ὅτι φησὶν ὁ συγγραφεὺς ἄγαλμα τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἰδεῖν ἱδρυμένον Ἡρώδου τοῦ σοφιστοῦ ἀνάθημα. τοῦτο οὖν, φησί, θεασάμενος ἵδρωσα μὲν ὑπὸ *θάμβους* καὶ *ἐκπλήξεως*, οὕτω δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν διετέθην ὑπὸ τῆς εὐφροσύνης, ὥστε οὐχ οἷός τ' ἦν οἴκαδε ἐπανιέναι, πολλάκις δὲ ἀπιὼν ἐπαναστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸ θέαμα· τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ κάλλος ἐνεκέρασεν ὁ τεχνίτης, οὐ γλυκύ τι καὶ ἀφροδίσιον, ἀλλὰ βλοσυρόν τε καὶ ἀνδρικόν, ἔνοπλον μέν, οἷον δὲ ἀπὸ νίκης ἐπανηγμένης καὶ τὸ γεγηθὸς ἐπιφαινούσης.

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phany (*epiphaneia*, ἐπιφάνεια), and hence the ancient term *epiphaneia* is applicable to a broader category of phenomena than its modern counterpart. The gods might be present in "'their own' human shapes, as statues or in animal forms."[2] In the wake of Versnel and others, recent research has called scholarly attention to epiphany as a key element of religious life in ancient Greece.[3]

Damascius describes the overwhelming effects of the epiphany of Aphrodite that he experienced in terms of mental disorientation: it left him in a state of confusion (*ekplêxis*, ἔκπληξις). In this paper, I intend to explore this notion of *ekplêxis*, translated throughout as "confusion," in late pagan Neoplatonic metaphysics, aesthetics and theurgy, i.e., the rituals by means of which the pagan Neoplatonists sought to enter into contact with the gods. I will do so by analysing the occurrence of the term in the most voluminous of all late Neoplatonic authors, Proclus (412–485 CE), Damascius' famous predecessor as head of the Athenian Neoplatonic Academy. I will argue that Proclus holds that the confusion (*ekplêxis*) that results from encounters with perceptible manifestations of divine Beauty, i.e., epiphanies, prepares a human soul for spiritual union with the divine.

This paper falls into two parts. The first part examines the metaphysics of *ekplêxis* and its corresponding role in theurgic ritual. It starts with a brief perusal the Platonic source texts that inform the Neoplatonic concept of *ekplêxis*. Plato, both in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, associates *ekplêxis* with the unsettling experience of falling in love with a beautiful person. Plato explains the effect that the beautiful beloved has on the lover from the fact that physical beauty allows us catch first glance of the Form of Beauty, to which the philosophically minded couple of lovers will ultimately ascend. Falling in love is hence presented as analogous to the first stage of the Eleusinian mysteries, which prepared the initiands for the revelations that constituted the second stage. The two subsequent sections take a closer look at Proclus' interpretation of these Platonic passages both in metaphysical and theurgic terms. For Proclus, the contemplation of Beauty prepares the way for union with the divine Good, and hence the former now corresponds to the first stage of the mystery rites and the latter to the second stage. Moreover, Plato's comparison of the

2 Versnel (1987) 51.

3 See, for example, the recent exhaustive study by Petridou (2015); for epiphany in relation to the artistic representations of the divine (one of the themes of this paper), cf. the recent monograph by Platt (2011), who does not, however, deal with late antiquity; for an instructive discussion of epiphany in relation to the religious thought of the Neoplatonist Iamblichus and the emperor Julian, see Tanaseanu-Döbler (2017).

ascent to the intelligible to the initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries gains new significance for Proclus, since he takes these mysteries to be fore-runners of his own theurgic practices. In the actual celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries and other theurgic rites, according to Proclus, the confusion (*ekplêxis*) brought about by epiphanies of beautiful *daimonic* beings brings about a bond of theurgic sympathy (*sympatheia*) with the gods proper that allow human beings to partake in the good gifts that they bestow on us.

In the second half of this paper, I shall turn to the aesthetics of epiphany. In Greek aesthetical theory *ekplêxis* is associated with the power of great works of art to move their public emotionally. Proclus ascribes this effect to a divine presence, as will appear from two examples, one taken from the visual arts, that of statues of the gods, and one from the domain of literature, that of Plato's sublime myths. In these cases too, *ekplêxis* turns us around towards and unites us with the divine. Once again, Proclus talks about this confusing effect of works of art in theurgic terms. In fact, for him animated statues in particular are a prime example of actual theurgical practices.

1 *Ekplêxis*, Neoplatontic Metaphysics and Theurgic Union

1.1 Ekplêxis, *Platonic Love and Eleusinian Mysteries*

Neoplatonic descriptions of *ekplêxis* are informed first and foremost by Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. In these two dialogues that celebrate the power of love, Plato describes how the confusing experience of seeing a beautiful person and falling in love with him may set in motion a process of spiritual movement away from physical beauty to the intelligible Platonic Forms and to that of Beauty itself in particular. In both dialogues Plato compares the gradual progress of the Platonic philosopher towards the contemplation of the Forms to the proceedings of the Eleusinian mysteries, and in particular to the distinction between an initial, preparatory stage and a second one during which sacred objects were revealed to the initiands. This preparatory stage of the Eleusinian mysteries sought to recreate the state of emotional confusion associated with divine epiphany. It apparently consisted of terrifying experiences that were intended to disorientate the initiands and thus make them more receptive to the revelations of the subsequent stage.

The *Phaedrus* (251a) describes the unsettling experience of falling in love in graphic detail: the lover will first shiver and then break out in a sweat and be hot. He would sacrifice to the beloved as he would to the statue of a god, had the fear of appearing mad not prevented him from doing so. Plato's description, in its turn, takes its inspiration from that great poetess of love, Sappho.

In a famous poem (31 ed. Vogt), she describes how she is unable to look at her beloved. Doing so causes her to experience all sorts of strong physical reactions, including, once again, breaking into a sweat.[4] One example of a person who falls into a state of confusion because of love is Alcibiades. In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades describes how the words of Socrates move him unlike those of any acclaimed orator:

> T.2 You know, people hardly ever take a speaker seriously, even if he is the greatest orator; but let anyone – man, woman, or child – listen to you (i.e., Socrates, RMvdB) or even a poor account of what you say – and we are all confused (*ekpeplegmenoi*) and completely possessed. (Pl. *Smp*. 215d1–6; transl. Nehamas and Woodruff 1997, 497)[5]

Listening to Socrates, Alcibiades continues, brings him to tears and makes his heart leap (Plato, *Symposium* 215e1–3). He ascribes the mesmerizing effect of Socrates' words to the fact that they are divine. In this respect they are similar to the melodies of the mythical fluteplayer Marsyas, which have "in themselves the power to possess and so reveal those people who are ready for the god and his mysteries" (Plato, *Phaedrus* 215c4–6). Thus, Plato here identifies *ekplêxis* with a state of ecstasy caused by the fact that the divine is present in Socrates' words.[6]

Seeing a beautiful person will not affect everybody in the same way. In the case of most people, it will simply arouse a desire for sexual intercourse. In a minority of philosophically-minded people, however, it will rekindle recollections of the Form of Beauty, which we contemplated before birth when we were pure souls. Plato describes this contemplation of Beauty and the other Forms in some detail in the famous great myth of the *Phaedrus*. According to this myth, the Olympian gods tour the heavens in their chariots while contemplating the Forms, for example those of Justice, Self-Control and Beauty. The contemplation of the latter in particular makes a lasting impact:

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4 Sapph. *Fr*. 31, 13: μ' ἴδρως κακχέεται.

5 Pl. *Smp*. 215d1–6: ἡμεῖς γοῦν ὅταν μέν του ἄλλου ἀκούωμεν λέγοντος καὶ πάνυ ἀγαθοῦ ῥήτορος ἄλλους λόγους, οὐδὲν μέλει ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν οὐδενί· ἐπειδὰν δὲ σοῦ τις ἀκούῃ ἢ τῶν σῶν λόγων ἄλλου λέγοντος, κἂν πάνυ φαῦλος ᾖ ὁ λέγων, ἐάντε γυνὴ ἀκούῃ ἐάντε ἀνὴρ ἐάντε μειράκιον, *ἐκπεπληγμένοι ἐσμὲν* καὶ κατεχόμεθα.

6 Cf. ps. Pl. *Clit*. 407a5–8: Clitophon has often been confused when listening to Socrates (πολλάκις ἐξεπληττόμην ἀκούων), when he told people off "like a god in a tragedy hanging from a crane" (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ μηχανῆς τραγικῆς θέος). Hence the impact of Socrates on his audience is here compared to a theatrical imitation of a divine epiphany.

> T.3 But Beauty was radiant to see at that time, when the souls, along with the glorious chorus – we [philosophers] were with Zeus, while others followed other gods – saw the blessed and spectacular vision and were ushered into the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all. And we who celebrated it were wholly perfect and free of all the troubles that awaited us in time to come, and we gazed in rapture at sacred revealed objects that were perfect. (Pl. *Phdr*. 250b5–c2; transl. Nehamas and Woodruff 1997, 527–528)[7]

Plato here compares the contemplation of the Form of Beauty to the final stage of the initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, that of the revelation of the sacred objects. The idea, then, is that seeing a beautiful person causes such an emotional shock that it makes you start looking for the metaphysical source of that beauty, with the result that you will end up contemplating the Form of Beauty itself.

1.2 *Proclus on the Metaphysics of Divine Beauty*

Plato is rather noncommittal about the structure of the intelligible. In particular, he does not discuss the precise relation between Beauty itself, which, to judge from the above-quoted passage from the *Phaedrus*, apparently holds a position of prominence within the realm of Forms and the Idea of the Good, which in the *Republic* is presented as an entity that transcends Being and hence the other Forms. The Neoplatonists, as part of their efforts to systematize Plato's teachings, try to clear up this confusion. This urge to systematize Plato finds its fullest expression in Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, an elaborate account of the divine world in which Proclus traces the emanation of the divine from the top (the One) down to the material cosmos. In the first book of this *summa* of late Neoplatonic theology, Proclus discusses briefly the *Phaedrus*. According to Proclus, the *Phaedrus* teaches us about a set of three attributes of the gods: goodness (*agathon*), wisdom (*sophia*), and beauty (*kallon*). The gods in this context are the so-called Henads, i.e., manifestation of the highest principle, the One (*to Hen*), that act as the ultimate causes of all other entities that populate the Neoplatonic metaphysical universe. These Henads, i.e., the Gods properly speaking, are in particular the causes of all lower divine beings, such as the gods mentioned in the myth of the *Phaedrus*

7 Pl. *Phdr*. 250b5–c2: κάλλος δὲ τότ' ἦν ἰδεῖν λαμπρόν, ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῷ μακαρίαν ὄψιν τε καὶ θέαν, ἑπόμενοι μετὰ μὲν Διὸς ἡμεῖς, ἄλλοι δὲ μετ' ἄλλου θεῶν, εἶδόν τε καὶ ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν ὁλόκληροι μὲν αὐτοὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀπαθεῖς κακῶν ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρῳ χρόνῳ ὑπέμενεν …

and of the so-called *daimons*, inferior divine beings who act as a go-between between for the gods and men. The three divine attributes of the Henads stand in a hierarchical relation to one another. Goodness is superior to the other two attributes since it is most like the One itself.[8] Second in rank comes wisdom, since wisdom "is already in labour" with regard to "the intelligible light and the very first forms."

> T.4 Beauty, finally, is seated on top of the Forms and shines forth the divine light and is the first to shine out (*ekphaineitai*) to those who go up, outshining even the Morningstar in brightness, even more lovely for them to see and to embrace and to take hold of in a state of confusion when it appears (*met' ekplêxeôs ekphainomenon*). (Procl. *Theol.Plat.* I.24.108.23–109.2)[9]

"Those who go up" are those souls who, according to the *Phaedrus*, follow Zeus and the other Olympian gods and who are initiated into "the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all" (cf. T.3). Note, however, that whereas the *Phaedrus* suggests that the vision of Beauty constitutes the final phase of the initiation, Proclus here presents the vison of Beauty as a *first* manifestation (*ekphainon*) of the divine Henads. Beauty, Proclus says, "heralds the secret of the (divine) goodness, for which reason it is called "the radiant one, and bright one, the one that shines out."[10] It is because of its luminous nature that Beauty throws the soul into confusion (*ekplêxis*) when it appears. Proclus elaborates on the preparatory function of the vision of Beauty in the following passage from book three of the *Platonic Theology*:

> T.5 For the radiance and energy of it (Beauty itself) shoots straight through the entire soul and turns (*epistrephei*) it in its entirety towards the vison of Beauty as that which of all things resembles the Good most closely. [...] And just as in the most holy of mysteries the confusion (*ekplêxis*) of the initiates precedes the visions of mystic objects, in the same way in the intelligible realm, before the communion with the Good, Beauty appears and causes confusion (*ekplêttei*) among the view-

8 As will be explained below, in Neoplatonic metaphysics the One coincides with the Good itself.

9 Procl. *Theol.Plat.* I.24.108.23–109.2: τὸ δὲ αὖ κάλλος ἐπ' ἄκροις ἵδρυται τοῖς εἴδεσι καὶ προλάμπει τὸ θεῖον φῶς καὶ τοῖς ἀνιοῦσι πρῶτον *ἐκφαίνεται*, παντὸς φωσφόρου στιλπνότερον καὶ ἐρασμιώτερον ἰδεῖν καὶ περιπτύξασθαι καὶ *μετ' ἐκπλήξεως ἐκφαινόμενον* λαβεῖν.

10 Procl. *Theol.Plat.* I.24.108.19–20.

> ers and turns the soul (*epistrephei*) and, being seated in the porch, shows what the One, hidden inside the sanctuary, is like. (Procl. *Theol.Plat.* III.18.64.2–12)[11]

Beauty is here presented as the perceptible manifestation (if only to the soul's eye) of the One or the Good that remains "hidden inside the sanctuary." Thus, the vision of Beauty precedes and prepares us for the "communion with the One," i.e., Beauty brings us into contact with the One or the Good by turning us around (*epistrephein*). Proclus uses here a Neoplatonic technical term, *epistrophê*, which indicates the movement of the soul back to the origin of all things (the One) and hence its ultimate destination (hence the One doubles as the ultimate Good to which everything aspires). This turning around is associated with the violent experience of confusion (*ekplêxis*) that was part of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In fact, scholars of the Eleusian Mysteries have quoted this particular passage to illustrate the importance of confusion (*ekplêxis*) in the celebration of mystery-cults.[12] Note, however, that soul which is about to experience Neoplatonic Beauty has already completely transcended its bodily existence, so all talk about shocking experiences, mystery rites[13] and seeing mystic objects is merely meant as a comparison intended to give the reader an impression of what such an extraordinary experience is like. In a much earlier stage of the ascent of the soul, which involves actual initiations and strong emotions, however, we find the same pattern. Shocking experiences of perceptible forms of beauty are manifestations, i.e., epiphanies, of the divine which serve to bring us in closer contact with divine goodness. It is in this context of actual mystery rites that the practise of Neoplatonic theurgy becomes relevant.

1.3 *The Eleusinian Mysteries as Neoplatonic Theurgy*

We know frustratingly little about what went on during the Eleusinian mysteries that inform Plato's description of the ascent of the soul towards the

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11 Procl. *Theol.Plat.* III.18.64.2–12: Τὸ γὰρ ἐκλάμπον αὐτοῦ καὶ δραστήριον ὀξέως διὰ πάσης χωρεῖ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ πᾶσαν *ἐπιστρέφει* θεωμένην τὸ καλὸν ὡς τῷ ἀγαθῷ πάντων ὁμοιότατον· … Καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς ἁγιωτάταις τελεταῖς πρὸ τῶν μυστικῶν θεαμάτων *ἔκπληξις* τῶν μυουμένων, οὕτω δὴ κἀν τοῖς νοητοῖς πρὸ τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μετουσίας τὸ κάλλος προφαινόμενον *ἐκπλήττει* τοὺς ὁρῶντας καὶ *ἐπιστρέφει* τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ δείκνυσιν ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ἱδρυμένον οἷόν ἐστιν ἄρα τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀδύτοις καὶ τὸ κρύφιον ἀγαθόν.

12 See Roussel (1934) 833–834 and Clinton (1974) 56.

13 On Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; on Egyptian mystic union see Chpt. 3 and nn. 8, 18, 30. On theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, sect. 3.

intelligible realm and Beauty itself. One of the few snippets available is the following:

> T.6 … just as Aristotle is of the opinion that the initiates need not learn (*mathein*) anything, but undergo experiences (*pathein*) and be brought into a certain condition, i.e., they have become fit (*epitêdeios*, i.e., for the revelation). (Arist. *Fr.* 15; ed. Rose = Synesius *Dio* 10)[14]

This passage provides another illustration of the strong emotions involved with the initiations into the Eleusinian mysteries. In the context of this paper, I shall not touch upon the issue of the precise role of these emotions in the celebration of the mysteries in the classical period.[15] From what we have seen so far, however, it has emerged that Proclus assigns a preparatory function to such experiences. They may bring about a 'road to Damascus'-moment and covert the soul away from the material realm, towards the intelligible divine world. For all the importance, though, that Proclus attaches to this experience of *ekplêxis*, it seemingly sits ill with his Neoplatonic psychology. According to the Neoplatonists, soul taken by itself is impassive (*apathês*), i.e., it is an active principle that does not undergo or experience anything. However, according to Proclus, the soul, once it descends from the immaterial realm into the domain of matter, loses much of its activity and becomes increasingly passive, and hence liable to experiences or emotions (*pathê*).[16] At the same time, the soul develops a need for images. Discussing the function of mythological stories which provides graphical accounts about the gods, Proclus writes:

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14 Arist. *Fr.* 15: … καθάπερ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιοῖ τοὺς τελουμένους *οὐ μαθεῖν* τί δεῖν, ἀλλὰ *παθεῖν* καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους *ἐπιτηδείους*· On this phrase see Burkert (1987) 69, 89–90 on the participation in the mysteries as a special form of experience; on the same topic see Bremmer (2014) 13–14.

15 On this issue, and in particular on the relation between *pathein* (experience) and *mathein* (instruction), see the illuminating paper by Herrero (2018).

16 Procl. *in Ti.* III.330.8–331.2 explains how the impassive soul may undergo emotions once it has descended into a body. He compares the impassive soul to someone who standing upon a river bank sees his reflection in the water of the river undergoing all sorts of deformation. On the mistaken assumption that he himself is that reflection, the person on the river bank next believes that it is him undergoing all these things. "In the same manner the soul too, catching sight of its own image in the body being carried away upon the river of generation and being disposed in different ways at different times under the influence of both internal affections and external collisions, is itself unaffected, but its images that it is being affected in ignorance of itself; and believing that its image is itself, it is amazed (τεθορύβηταί), confused (ἐκπέπληκται) and at a loss." (transl. Tarrant 2017, 222 adapted).

> T.7 Since … souls have become emotional instead of impassive and inclined to give things shape instead of having no concern with shape, it is reasonable to say that using this kind of myths is an appropriate way of teaching them. (Procl. *in R.* II.207.21–23; transl. Bychkov and Sheppard 2010, 238 slightly adapted).[17]

So, our need for epiphanies, i.e., visible manifestations of the gods, is related to our embodied state, as is the fact that we respond in an emotional manner to these. But how exactly does such an experience prepare us for the revelation that marks the second, final phase of the initiation?

According to T.6, the initiates should be "rendered fit" for the revelation. This remark may perhaps be read as a gloss that was added by Synesius to clarify the quotation from Aristotle to his contemporary readership, for fitness (*epitêdeiotês*; ἐπιτηδειότης) is a key-concept in Neoplatonic theurgy. According to the Neoplatonists, the divine, being itself immaterial, is not bound by physical boundaries. Hence the divine is omni-present. The problem, however, is that not all material things are equally fit to partake in and hence profit from this divine presence. Hence, the theurgist, when he wishes to call forth the divine powers, may construct a statue that is more fit (*epitêdeios*) than others to receive the divine power. He does so by combining all sorts of materials (i.e., parts of animals, plants and stones) that are congenial to the relevant divine power. These materials are called symbols (*symbola*) or passwords (*sunthêmata*).[18] Whereas each symbol by itself might be too weak to receive the divine, a combination of these may achieve the desired effect. The statue is now fit to receive the divine presence and responsive to it, or, as the Neoplatonists would, sympathetic to the divine.

We may now piece together the following picture. Just as the theurgist renders statues fit for the reception of the divine presence, in a similar way the emotional experience of an epiphany may change us in such a way that we become sympathetic to the divine. This state of sympathy is once again

17 Procl. *in R.* II.207.21–23: … γενομέναις ἀπαθέσι παθητικαῖς, ἀμορφώτοις μορφωτικαῖς, πρέπων ἐστὶν τρόπος διδασκαλίας εἰκότως ὁ διὰ τῶν τοιῶνδε μύθων·.

18 See e.g., Procl. *in Cra.* 51.19.12–15: "[t]he art of *telestic* consecration through certain symbols and ineffable passwords fashions the statues which are in this way like the gods and makes these statues fit (ἐπιτήδεια) for the reception of divine illumination" (transl. Duvick 2007, 28 adapted); for this theurgic sense of ἐπιτηδειότης, see further, for example, Procl. *in Ti.* I.162.8 and II.231.18 and Tanaseanu-Döbler (2017) 348. On Mesopotamian Royal symbols see Chpt. 1, sect. 4 and n. 40. On Orphic mystic union and symbols see Chpt. 7, sect. 1 and n. 5; on Platonic notions of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; on theurgic union and symbols see Chpt. 11, sect. 2 and n. 1, and sect. 3.

associated with emotional outbursts, be it this time that these are a sign of gratitude for the good gifts that gods bestow on those to whom they have appeared. When Marinus in his biography of Proclus describes the epiphanies that had been granted to Proclus, he mentions twice that whenever Proclus recounted his experiences to his students he was reduced to tears because of his sympathy with the divine. The first case concerns a double epiphany of Asclepius, who had cured Proclus from the painful arthritic condition that he was suffering from. According to Marinus, Proclus could not talk about it "without tears, because of his sympathy (*sympatheia*; συμπάθεια) with the god" (Marin. *Vit. Procl.* 31. 1–2). The other case is that of the god that was present in the sanctuary of Adratta (Lycia, the region from which Proclus' family hailed). When Proclus visited the shrine, this deity appeared to him in a dream praising Proclus as "the glory of the city." Once again, Marinus reports that Proclus, "because of his great sympathy with the god, was completely reduced to tears, whenever he recalled to us, not just the visions that he had seen, but also the words of praise that the god had spoken to him" (Marin. *Vit. Procl.* 32. 38–42). In both these cases, the tears are those of gratefulness. Asclepius had cured Proclus of a detrimental illness and the god of Adratta had honored him. In a similar way, those initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries expected to benefit from the experience. In other words, the *pathos* (emotional experience) associated with the first stage of the mysteries produces a state of *sympatheia* (theurgic sympathy) that allows the soul to be moved by the gods and make it receptive the good things that the gods bestow on the initiands during the second stage of the mysteries.

We find further corroboration of this theurgic interpretation of the confusing experience associated with the mysteries from Proclus's above-mentioned discussion of the function of myths in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic*. The passage is quoted by Walter Burkert in his epochal study about Greek mystery cults as a last witness of the deep emotional impact of initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries.[19] Proclus writes:

> T.8 That myths also have an effect on the many, is apparent from the initiation rites. For these too cause the souls to be sympathetic (*sympatheia*) with the proceedings in a manner that is both unknowable to us and

19 Burkert (1987) 113–114; admittedly, Eleusis had been destroyed some fifteen years before Proclus was born, but, Burkert remarks, Proclus knew well the daughter of the last Eleusinian hierophant Nestorius, one Asclepigeneia, whom he admired greatly because of her knowledge of the sacred traditions. Note, that Asclepigeneia was in fact the granddaughter of Nestorius (Marin. *Vit. Procl.* 28.10–15).

> divine by making use of myths in order to box off the unspeakable truth concerning the gods, and; the result is that some of the initiates become terrified (*kataplêttesthai*) and are filled with fear for the divine (*deimatôn theiôn*), while some others are sympathetically affected together with the holy symbols and in a state of ecstasy establish themselves completely among the gods and are inspired by them. For at any rate, to my mind at least, those sorts of beings that are superior to us and that follow the gods, because of their affection towards such passwords, awake in us a sympathy (*sympatheia*) towards the gods through these. For how else could it be that with such passwords the entire earth is full of all sorts of good things that the gods grant to human beings, but that without these everything is bereft of divine inspiration and illumination? But we have already provided an exhaustive treatment of the causes of myths in *On Mythical Symbols*. (Procl. *in R.* II.108.17–32)[20]

In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades had observed that not everybody is affected by the mystery rites in the same way. Only people ready for it will succumb to a state of ecstasy. In this text, we see something similar: some people will just be frightened out of their wits, but others will be truly inspired and receive the divine goods.[21] Note the role of intermediaries in the process. Before entering into contact with the gods and the good things that they confer upon us, the initiates need first to be rendered sympathetic, in the theurgic sense of the word, to the gods. This is the role of the "sorts of beings that are superior to us and that follow the gods." The phrase recalls the myth of the *Phaedrus*, according to which the Olympian gods, when driving their chariots around the rim of heavens in contemplation of the Forms, are followed by lesser divine beings, i.e., *daimons*, as well as human souls. These *daimons*, since they belong to the same causal series as the god that stands at the head of such a series, are attracted to material symbols that belong to this causal series.

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20 Procl. *in R.* II.108.17–32: Ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς δρῶσιν οἱ μῦθοι, δηλοῦσιν αἱ τελεταί. καὶ γὰρ αὗται χρώμεναι τοῖς μύθοις, ἵνα τὴν περὶ θεῶν ἀλήθειαν ἄρρητον κατακλείωσιν, *συμπαθείας* εἰσὶν αἴτιαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς περὶ τὰ δρώμενα τρόπον ἄγνωστον ἡμῖν καὶ θεῖον· ὡς τοὺς μὲν τῶν τελουμένων *καταπλήττεσθαι δειμάτων θείων πλήρεις γιγνομένους*, τοὺς δὲ συνδιατίθεσθαι τοῖς ἱεροῖς συμβόλοις καὶ ἑαυτῶν ἐκστάντας ὅλους ἐνιδρῦσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἐνθεάζειν· πάντως που καὶ τῶν ἑπομένων αὐτοῖς κρειττόνων ἡμῶν γενῶν διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα συνθήματα φιλίαν ἀνεγειρόντων ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς δι' αὐτῶν *συμπάθειαν*. ἢ πῶς μετ' ἐκείνων μὲν πᾶς ὁ περὶ γῆν τόπος μεστὸς ἦν παντοίων ἀγαθῶν, ὧν θεοὶ προξενοῦσιν ἀνθρώποις, ἄνευ δὲ ἐκείνων ἅπνοα πάντα καὶ ἄμοιρα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἐστιν ἐπιλάμψεως; Ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν μύθων τὰς αἰτίας καὶ ἐν τοῖς Περὶ τῶν μυθικῶν συμβόλων ἐξειργάσμεθα.

21 On these different responses see Burkert (1987) 114.

In the mystery rites, according to Proclus' interpretation, the priests summon forth these *daimonic* powers in order to render the initiates sympathetic to the divine.

The close connection between *ekplêxis* and *daimonic* forces also comes to the fore in Proclus' *Commentary on the Alcibiades*, when he discusses the overwhelming impression that Alcibiades claims Socrates made on him. At the very beginning of the *Alcibiades* (103a1), Socrates observes that Alcibiades seems amazed (*thaumazein*) that he, Socrates, his oldest lover, has not given up on him, unlike the others.[22] Socrates claims that there is a supra-human, i.e., *daimonic*, cause for his perseverance. He thus suggests that his persistent amorous pursuit of Alcibiades is not prompted by some base desire, but by a god-given command to try to save Alcibiades from a life of unlimited, and therefore pointless, worldly ambition by converting him to philosophy. Proclus comments:

> T.9 Socrates thus already appears to be some sort of *daimonic* creature, since he creates an even greater mental confusion (*ekplêxis*) in him (i.e., Alcibiades, RMvdB) and increases further his amazement (*thauma*) about philosophy. And it is reasonable that Socrates does this. For in many cases such confusing experiences (*ekplêxeis*) make us sympathetic (*sympatheia*) towards the good. Thus, just as in the most holy initiations certain disturbing experiences (*kataplêxeis*) proceed the performances of the mysteries, some of which subject the soul to the divine by what is said, others by what is shown, in the same manner also, while they [i.e., Socrates and Alcibiades, RMvdB] stand in the porch of philosophy, his guide creates amazement (*thauma*) and confusion (*ekplêxis*) in the young man about himself (i.e., Socrates, RMvdB) in order that the arguments that are put forward will have an effect on him and will call him to the philosophical life. (Procl. *in Alc.* 61.8–62.2)[23]

22 I will comment on Proclus' theurgic understanding of amazement (*thauma*) in greater detail below.

23 Procl. *in Alc.* 61.8–62.2: δείκνυται οὖν ἤδη καὶ *δαιμόνιός τις* ὁ Σωκράτης μείζονα *τὴν ἔκπληξιν* ἀνεγείρων ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ πολλαπλασιάζων τὸ *θαῦμα* τὸ περὶ φιλοσοφίαν. καὶ τοῦτο εἰκότως ὁ Σωκράτης ποιεῖ· πολλαχοῦ γὰρ αἱ τοιαῦται *ἐκπλήξεις* εἰς τὴν περὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἡμᾶς ἐπισπῶνται *συμπάθειαν*. ὥσπερ οὖν ἐν ταῖς ἁγιωτάταις τῶν τελετῶν προηγοῦνται τῶν δρωμένων *καταπλήξεις* τινές, αἱ μὲν διὰ τῶν λεγομένων, αἱ δὲ διὰ τῶν δεικνυμένων ὑποκατακλίνουσαι τῷ θείῳ τὴν ψυχήν, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐν τοῖς τῆς φιλοσοφίας προθύροις ἀνεγείρει *θαῦμα* τῷ νεανίσκῳ καὶ *ἔκπληξιν* περὶ ἑαυτὸν ὁ καθηγούμενος, ἵνα δράσωσιν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ λόγοι προϊόντες καὶ ἐκκαλέσωνται πρὸς τὴν φιλόσοφον ζωήν.

It is telling that Proclus here equates Alcibiades' amazement about Socrates' loyalty with the overwhelming experience of *ekplêxis* during the initiatory state of the initiation. Nothing in the Platonic text justifies this assumption, but we may perhaps assume that Proclus reads this with the above-discussed passage from the *Symposium* (T.2) in mind. Socrates' position as a *daimonic* force that stands in the porch of philosophy and which converts Alcibiades towards philosophy is analogous to the position of Beauty itself which "seated in the porch, shows what the One" and which turns (*epistrephei*) the soul towards the Good (T.5). Both the *daimonic* Socrates and Beauty in turn are analogous to the confusing preparatory stage of the Eleusinian mysteries that prepares the participants for communion with the divine.

2 *Ekplêxis* and Neoplatonic Aesthetics: Some Illustrations

2.1 *A Case of Aesthetic* Ekplêxis*: Animated Statues*

Now that we have examined the role of *ekplêxis* in Neoplatonic theorizing about theurgy, let us turn to some actual examples of the emotional shock associated with divine epiphany through beautiful works of art, in particular in the case of statues and literature. As we noted briefly in the introduction, ancient Greek religion associated cult statues with divine epiphanies. It has been argued that chryselephantine cult statues in particular had been designed so as to recreate the experience of epiphany, the glimmer of the gold together with the whiteness of the ivory evoking feelings of surprise and admiration that were traditionally associated with the luminous appearances of the gods.[24] Proclus, in a passage from his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, explains the aesthetic qualities of a statue from the degree in which the divine is present to that statue. Echoing Plotinus essay *On Beauty* (*Enneads* 1.6 [1]), Proclus holds that the beauty of physical objects is due to their participation in the Intelligible.[25] The degree of beauty is thus directly related to the degree of participation. This explains, thus Proclus, why Plato in the *Timaeus* describes the material cosmos as being "the most beautiful," because it, being the handiwork of the Demiurge, participates more than any other physical object in the intelligible. Moreover, the more beautiful an object, i.e., the more it partakes

24 I borrow this description of the visual impact of chryselephantine statues from Constaninidou (2010) 92; Platt (2011) 83–91 makes a similar point in connection to the statue of Athena Parthenos by Phidias.

25 On this passage and its relation to Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6 [1], cf. Sheppard (2017) 283–285.

in the intelligible, the more the divine is present to it. This holds also true for statues:

> T.10 Every image that participates more distinctly in the form is indeed an image of a paradigm with a higher degree of purity. Just as in the case of statues connected with the practice of initiation, those who obtain a dimmer divine presence (*parousia*)[26] enjoy the secondary and the tertiary powers of the divine, but those who obtain a clear presence participate in the very first and highest creations of the divine, in the same way, I imagine, the god, who was initiator of the cosmos made it appear most beautiful as an image of the very first of eternal beings. (Procl. *in Ti.* 1.330.29–331.4; transl. Runia and Share 2008, 186)[27]

In his recent study of this passage, Todd Krulak wonders why some of those statues attract only the secondary and tertiary powers of the gods. He suggests that in the case of these statues either the animation ritual had not been performed completely perfect or that these statues were less fit to receive the divine. It may also be due to a combination of these two explanations. Krulak thus seems to ascribe the difference between the statues in terms of some sort of failure. In view of what we have seen so far, however, I take it that Proclus assumes that the difference between the statues is intentional. Above (cf. T.8), we found that encounters with *daimonic* epiphanies supposedly prepared the initiands for the manifestation of the gods who correspond to those *daimons*. In a similar fashion, we may assume that the contemplation of statues inhabited by *daimonic* powers proceeds the contemplation of statues of the corresponding divine power. If so, the statues associated with the secondary and tertiary divine powers should not be thought of as imperfect versions of the ones associated with primary divine powers, but as being intentionally designed to attract a *daimonic* presence.

The statue of Aphrodite that threw Damascius off balance (T.1), is such a *daimonic* statue.

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26 For the ancient Greeks epiphany is about divine presence (*parousia*), see Versnel's definition of epiphany quoted in the introduction.

27 Procl. *in Ti.* 1.330.29–331.4: πᾶσα γὰρ εἰκὼν ἐναργέστερον μετέχουσα τοῦ εἴδους καθαρωτέρου παραδείγματός ἐστιν εἰκών· καὶ ὥσπερ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς τελεστικῆς ἀγαλμάτων τὰ μὲν ἀμυδροτέρας τυχόντα *τῆς τοῦ θείου παρουσίας* δευτέρων ἀπολαύει καὶ τρίτων τοῦ θείου δυνάμεων, τὰ δὲ ἐναργεστέρας καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν πρωτίστων αὐτοῦ καὶ ⟦τῶν⟧ ἀκροτάτων μετέχει ποιήσεων, τὸν αὐτὸν δήπου τρόπον καὶ ὁ τοῦ κόσμου τελεσιουργὸς θεὸς κάλλιστον αὐτὸν ἀπέφηνεν ὡς εἰκόνα τοῦ πρωτίστου τῶν αἰωνίων·

The description of Damascius' affections, i.e., the sweat, the amazement and confusion, echoes the descriptions of the effects of falling in love with a beautiful person in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. In this case, however, Damascius does not fall in love with a beautiful person, but with a beautiful statue of the goddess of love herself. Damascius next elaborates briefly on the beauty of the statue: it is not the sweet or sensual beauty usually associated with Aphrodite, but a dignified and virile one. This description invites comparison to another statue of Aphrodite, the famous nude Aphrodite of Cnidus by Praxiteles. It was so life-like, thus generating the experience of epiphany, that it exercised a strong erotic attraction on male visitors, even to the degree that some tried to have sex with it.[28] Praxiteles's statue thus represented what in the Platonic tradition is called the demotic or vulgar manifestation of Aphrodite, the one that is primarily concerned with the desire for sex and procreation. The Aphrodite of Damascius, on the other hand, is a manifestation of Aphrodite Ourania, i.e., heavenly Aphrodite, who imbues philosophical souls with the desire to ascend towards intelligible Beauty. She encourages the more philosophically minded people to turn their back to the body and its pleasures. It is hard to tell what this statue of a warlike Aphrodite looked like.[29] However, Proclus, in one of his hymns to Aphrodite Ourania, equips her with arrows, the weapons traditionally associated with Aphrodite's son Eros. More in particular, he prays to Aphrodite that she may steer his life "with your most righteous arrows, while putting an end to the chilly impulse of unholy desires' (Proclus *Hymn* 2. 19–21). We may assume that overwhelming experience of seeing the statue of Aphrodite has precisely this impact on Damascius: the amazement and confusion (*thambos* and *ekplêxis*) directs his focus away from the material world and fills him with desire for divine beauty, thus rendering him sympathetic to Aphrodite Ourania.

2.2 Ekplêxis *in the Neoplatonic Classroom: Sublime Platonic Myths and Inspired Teachers*

I will now turn to a different category of artworks in which the divine may be present and the encounter with which may turn the soul of the reader around. The above-quoted passage from Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* (T.8) offers, as we found, valuable information about the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries. It deserves mentioning, however, that this passage

28 For an extensive discussion of this statue in relation to epiphany, see Platt (2011) 180–211.

29 Ruurd Halbertsma has kindly drawn my attention to examples of representations of Aphrodite in arms, see, e.g., LIMC II, 1 (1984): 36 (Aphrodite with a lance) and 57 (Aphrodite with a sword).

is not primarily concerned with the celebration of these mysteries, but with the question of how texts may unify us to the divine. Just as theurgic statues that offer visual representations of invisible divine powers may attract the presence of these very divine powers by means of theurgic symbols or passwords, in the same way texts which depict the divine in words may attract their presence through literary symbolism. In T.8, Proclus refers his readers back to his now lost work *On Mythical Symbols* for further elaboration on this point. An elaborate discussion of symbolism in Homer's poems elsewhere in the *Commentary on the Republic* gives us a good impression of what may have been the gist of this treatise.[30] Proclus believes that Homer's poems were symbolical in a double sense. In reply to Plato's complaint about Homer's blasphemous depiction of the gods, Proclus argues that these should be understood symbolically, i.e., all those stories that Plato in the *Republic* found offensive of how the gods behave human all too human should not be taken at face-value, but instead as referring to Neoplatonic metaphysics. However, such symbolical literature functions also in the theurgic manner described above. The divine was believed to be present in inspired texts and this divine presence could in turn inspire the reader and hence connect him to the divine. This Proclean theory of literary symbolism in regard to the poems of Homer has received its fair share of scholarly attention. Note, however, that in this context, Proclus is talking primarily about Plato's myths, not those of Homer.

On the issue of the theurgic qualities of Plato's own myths, Proclus is far less informative. Our present study of the notion of *ekplêxis*, however, may allow us to speculate about this topic. The first thing to note is that *ekplêxis* is a term that is at much at home in ancient literary criticism as it is in religious contexts. In Plato's *Ion* 535b–c, e.g., Socrates uses it to describe the impact that the rhapsode Ion has on its public and ascribes that effect on Ion's ecstatic state. Ion next describes the violent emotions he experiences during a performance: he will have tears in his eyes, his heart will leap and his hair will stand up for fear. The term gains special prominence in the treatise *On Sublimity*, traditionally ascribed to a certain Longinus, perhaps the rhetorician and philosopher Cassius Longinus, who taught Porphyry before he became a pupil of Plotinus.[31] Sublimity in literature is a matter of writing in a grand style about elevated subjects in order to stir strong emotions in the audience, just

30 For discussion on this type of symbolism see Berg (2001) 91–101.

31 On the (contested) identification of the author of *On Sublimity* with Cassius Longinus, see Heath (1999).

as, for example, we may be moved by the sight of natural phenomena such as mighty rivers or erupting volcanoes. *Ekplêxis* is a crucial term in this context, as appears from the definition of sublimity that Longinus provides at the start of his treatise:

> T.11 Sublimity is a kind of eminence or excellence of discourse. It is the source of the distinction of the very greatest poets and prose writers and the means by which they have given eternal life to their own fame. For grandeur produces ecstasy rather than persuasion in the hearer; and the combination of confusion (*ekplêxis*) and amazement (*thaumasion*) always proves superior to the merely persuasive and pleasant. This is because persuasion is on the whole something we can control, whereas amazement and wonder exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer. (Longin. *Subl.* c. 1. 3–4; transl. Russell and Winterbottom 1972, 148 adapted)[32]

We see here the combination of *ekplêxis* and ecstasy that we have already encountered above in Plato's *Ion*. In fact, Longinus considers both Plato and Sappho to be sublime authors, because they have the power to move their readers emotionally. In the case of Sappho, he even quotes (c. 10.2) precisely the ode of Sappho in which she describes the unsettling effects of seeing her beloved which underlies the above-quoted passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*.

Longinus explicitly praises Plato (c. 13) for his grand and sublime style and presents him as striving to outdo the sublime author par excellence, Homer himself. He does not, unfortunately, deal with any of Plato's myths. Many ancient literary critics, however, celebrate the great myth of the *Phaedrus* for its grandeur that is characteristic of sublime literature.[33] At the beginning of the *Platonic Theology*, Proclus, for example, imagines that someone may accuse Plato that he is no better than the tragic poets when he interrupts serious philosophical discourse for this "solemn and impressive spectacle"

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32 Longin. *Subl.* c. 1. 3–4: … ἀκρότης καὶ ἐξοχή τις λόγων ἐστὶ τὰ ὕψη, καὶ ποιητῶν τε οἱ μέγιστοι καὶ συγγραφέων οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἢ ἐνθένδε ποθὲν ἐπρώτευσαν καὶ ταῖς ἑαυτῶν περιέβαλον εὐκλείαις τὸν αἰῶνα. οὐ γὰρ εἰς πειθὼ τοὺς ἀκροωμένους ἀλλ' εἰς ἔκστασιν ἄγει τὰ ὑπερφυᾶ· πάντη δέ γε *σὺν ἐκπλήξει* τοῦ πιθανοῦ καὶ τοῦ πρὸς χάριν ἀεὶ κρατεῖ *τὸ θαυμάσιον*, εἴγε τὸ μὲν πιθανὸν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ταῦτα δὲ δυναστείαν καὶ βίαν ἄμαχον προσφέροντα παντὸς ἐπάνω τοῦ ἀκροωμένου καθίσταται.

33 Cf. Porter (2010) 79 for examples of how the ancient "literary tradition was drawn like a magnet to this passage."

(ἡ τοιαύτη θεωρία σεμνὴ καὶ ὑπερφυής) that does not encourage philosophical investigation.[34]

Of course, Proclus does not agree. According to him, Plato combines his philosophical discourses with myths, because philosophical demonstration addresses the rational part of our soul, whereas myths appeal to its divine part. In doing so, he takes his inspiration from the ancient authors, such as the divinely inspired poet Homer:

> T.12 For this sort of discourse is not demonstrative, but inspired, invented by the ancients not as a tool of coercion, but rather as one persuasion, which aims not at bare instruction (*mathêsis psilê*), but at sympathy (*sympatheia*) with the subject-matter (i.e., the gods, RMvdB) at hand. (Procl. *Theol.Plat.* I.6.29.14–17)[35]

Philosophical demonstration has the power of logical necessity: one cannot but accept the outcome of a logically sound argument, even if one is unwilling to do so. This is different in the case of myths: they persuade us to accept them willingly.[36] The opposition between the bare instruction, offered by philosophical argument, and the non-rational sympathy offered by myths, recalls Aristotle's remark as quoted by the Neoplatonist Synesius (T.6 above), that the initiates need not learn (*mathein*) anything, but are made fit, i.e., are rendered sympathetic to the divine.

For Proclus, then, Plato is a divinely inspired author, just as Homer is. In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades had explained the emotional impact that Socrates has on him from the fact that he speaks divine words, just as divine music moves people. The above-mentioned passage from the *Ion*, furthermore, suggest that the performer of an inspired text will not only himself be moved

34 Procl. *Theol.Plat.* I.6.30.11–17; cf. Porter 2010: 78 n. 7. Another example of a sublime Platonic passage is the (beginning of the) speech of the Demiurge (cf. Pl. *Ti.* 41a), which Proclus (*in Ti.* III.199.29–200.3) describes, among other things, as "solemn" (σεμνός) and "striking" (καταπληκτικός; cf. T.9). Anne Sheppard (2017) 278 rightly observes that Proclus, when commenting on this Platonic passage, combines the 'jargon' of literary criticism with that of Platonic philosophy.

35 Procl. *Theol. Plat.* I.6.29.14–17: Οὐ γὰρ ἀποδεικτικὸν τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶδος τῶν λόγων, ἀλλ' ἐνθεαστικόν, οὐδὲ ἀνάγκης ἀλλὰ πειθοῦς ἕνεκα τοῖς παλαιοῖς μεμηχανημένον, οὐδὲ *μαθήσεως ψιλῆς* ἀλλὰ τῆς πρὸς τὰ πράγματα *συμπαθείας* στοχαζόμενον.

36 Note that this sort of persuasion is of a different kind than that which Longinus deems inferior to the ecstasy produced by sublime literature. For Proclus, the persuasion brought about by the Platonic myths is not the opposite of ecstasy but is more or less identical with it.

by his divinely inspired word, but pass on this inspiration to his public, who, like the performer, will share in the confusion (*ekplêxis*) that results from this inspiration. In this respect, the Platonic teacher is in a situation that is comparable to the Homeric rhapsode and the *daimonic* Socrates. Proclus, when in the *Platonic Theology* discusses various interpretations of the great myth of the *Phaedrus*, described above as a "solemn and impressive spectacle," recommends the interpretation of that myth by his master Syrianus, because Syrianus was apparently himself moved to ecstasy by the Platonic myth, in the manner described in T.9:

> T.13 For why should we talk about our guide, that true Bacchant, who was superbly inspired when it came to Plato and who radiated to us amazement (*thauma*) and confusion (*ekplêxis*) about the Platonic spectacle? (Procl. *Theol.Plat.* IV.23.69.8–12)[37]

Longinus, in his account of the sublime especially highlights especially the emotions of confusion (*ekplêxis*) and amazement (*thauma*) as hallmarks of great literature. Proclus here ascribes these same effects to the great myth from the *Phaedrus*. Above, we found that Proclus assigns theurgic powers to confusion (*ekplêxis*), if caused by some sort of divine presence. The same goes for amazement (*thauma*). Plato (*Theaetetus* 155d1–5) had famously stated that wonder is the characteristic emotion (*pathos*) from which philosophy starts.[38] The astonishment caused by the Platonic spectacle, i.e., by the literary imagery of the myth of the *Phaedrus*, creates the sort of amazement that fuels philosophical investigation. There is, however, also a religious aspect to it. When he discusses the notion of wonder in *his Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Proclus reminds his reader that wonder is not only a human emotion, but also a divine power:

> T.14 Amazement (*thauma*) comes first, since while already in our case (i.e., that of human beings) this is the starting point of the knowledge of universal entities, in the case of the gods it connects (*synaptein*) the amazed with the amazing. For this very reason, the wise men concerning divine matters praise Thaumas as a very great god, who by means of

37 Procl. *Theol.Plat.* IV.23.69.8–12: Τί γὰρ δεῖ λέγειν τὸν ἡμέτερον καθηγεμόνα τὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς Βάκχον, ὃς περὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα διαφερόντως ἐνθεάζων καὶ μέχρις ἡμῶν τὸ *θαῦμα* καὶ τὴν *ἔκπληξιν* τῆς Πλατωνικῆς θεωρίας ἐξέλαμψεν.

38 Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* A 2. 982b12–a19 for the same idea.

> amazement (*thauma*) makes secondary entities submit to primary ones. (Procl. *in Ti.* I.133.8–12)[39]

Human wonder is the sort of wonder that we just discussed, i.e., the wonder that initiates the philosophical search for the universal Forms. Divine wonder is about entering into contact with the divine. In fact, the Greek term that Proclus uses to describe this connection between man and god, *synaptein* (to connect) is a technical term used in theurgic contexts to describe a stage that precedes the final unification.[40]

3 Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen how Proclus associates the strong emotions that we may experience when exposed to beautiful works of art with *daimonic* powers that transport us away from the material world and that forge a bond of sympathy between us and the gods. The descriptions of the confusion that overcame Damascius when he saw the beautiful statue of Aphrodite and that of Syrianus when he read the sublime myth of the *Phaedrus* invite comparison to the so-called Stendhal-syndrome. Stendhal famously describes how, when he visited the Santa Croce basilica in Florence, the idea of the presence of all the great men buried there and "the contemplation of sublime beauty," suddenly got the better of him. He was overcome by such strong emotions that he left the church completely confused.[41] We may imagine that late Neoplatonists were prone to a similar experience for similar reasons. They believed to be surrounded by divine presences, while they considered the artworks that celebrated Greek pagan culture, be it statues of works of literature, as sublime works of art that had been produced by inspired artists. It comes as little surprise that viewing their surroundings in this state of mind, they too

39 Procl. *in Ti.* I.133.8–12: προηγεῖται μὲν οὖν τὸ *θαῦμα*, διότι καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀρχὴ τοῦτό ἐστι τῆς τῶν ὅλων γνώσεως, ἐν δὲ τοῖς θείοις *συνάπτει τῷ θαυμαζομένῳ τὸ θαυμάζον*· ὅθεν καὶ *Θαύμαντα* θεόν τινα μέγιστον ὑμνήκασιν οἱ τὰ θεῖα σοφοί, τὸν διὰ τοῦ *θαύματος* ὑποκατακλίνοντα τὰ δεύτερα τοῖς πρώτοις.

40 Contact (συναφή) with the gods is the third phase in Proclus' theory of prayer, cf. Berg (2001) 89. One of the wise man Proclus refers to is probably Hesiod. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates in support of his claim that philosophy starts from wonder, offers an allegorical interpretation of the bit of Hesiod's *Theogony* (265–267) according to which Iris, thought to represent philosophy, is the off-spring of Thaumas. For this identification of Iris with philosophy, cf. Procl. *in R.* II.255.23–25 and (possibly) Pl. *Cra.* 408b3.

41 Stendhal (1826) 325.

were at times overcome by strong, confusing emotions. While Stendhal himself framed his experience in terms of an at the time fashionable psychiatric condition (in Berlin, he notes, they would call it "the nerves"), the Neoplatonists understood similar experiences in religious terms and associated these with epiphanies. These must have been very welcome to them. As Verity Platt observes in her recent study of ancient epiphany, epiphanies provided "*cognitive reliability*, not only for the gods' existence, but also for the traditions of representation by which they were known to their worshippers."[42] If they chose to be present in the statues and other forms of representation that man had made of them, these representations apparently met with their favour. In an age in which Proclus and his fellow pagan Neoplatonists were fighting a last-ditch effort to stop Christianity, any proof for the existence of the traditional gods and the efficiency of pagan rites must have been extremely welcome.

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42 Platt (2011) 12.

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CHAPTER 11

Proclus' Theurgic Union, Θεουργικὴ Ἕνωσις, and the Concept of Fire

Eleni Pachoumi

1 Introduction

The chapter examines the theurgic union of the individuals with the divine, looking at the concept of fire in the final stages of theurgic union according to Proclus' treatise *On the Hieratic Art*, and comparing them with other references in philosophical and magical texts (e.g., the extracts from Proclus' *Chaldaean Philosophy*, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, the fragments of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the Greek magical papyri). Particular attention is paid to the association of the final stages with the divine light and fire in the divinisation of mortals. The chapter aims at illustrating the role of fire in the final stages of the theurgic union with examples from magico-theurgic texts, focusing on the philosophical and magical interactions reflected in the theurgic unions.

2 Definition and Important Stages of the Theurgic Union in Proclus' *On the Hieratic Art* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*

Before describing the important stages of the theurgic union, it is important to examine how Proclus describes the theurgic union, putting an emphasis on a conceptual blending of ritual actions (e.g., the role of statues, incense, symbols and passwords) and concepts (e.g., union with many powers, division and mixing): "and they often produce promiscuous statues and incenses, having mixed into one (mixture) the distributed passwords (*synthêmata*) and making the divine, as it were, comprehensible in its essence by art through the union with many powers, the dividing of which on the one hand made each one (power) indistinct, while the mixing on the other hand raised it up to the form of its archetype." (καὶ ἀγάλματα πολλάκις κατασκευάζουσι σύμμικτα καὶ θυμιάματα, φυράσαντες εἰς ἓν τὰ μερισθέντα συνθήματα καὶ ποιήσαντες τέχνῃ ὁποῖον κατ' οὐσίαν τὸ θεῖον περιληπτικὸν καθ' ἕνωσιν τῶν πλειόνων δυνάμεων, ὧν ὁ μὲν μερισμὸς ἠμύδρωσεν ἑκάστην, ἡ δὲ μῖξις ἐπανήγαγεν εἰς τὴν τοῦ παραδείγματος ἰδέαν. Procl. *Hier. Ar.* 5.12–17) (My transl.).

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Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis* II claims about the theurgic union: "for nor does contemplation unite theurgists to the gods" (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ἔννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεουργούς). In the question: "for what then would hinder the theoretical philosophers from establishing the theurgic union with the gods?" (ἐπεὶ τί ἐκώλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἔχειν τὴν θεουργικὴν ἕνωσιν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς;) Iamblichus replies that the theurgic union is established by secret acts and unspeakable symbols: "the accomplishment of acts not to be spoken and which are executed divinely beyond all conception and the power of unspeakable symbols conceived only by the gods establish the theurgic union" (ἡ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἥ τε τῶν νοουμένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνον συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δύναμις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεουργικὴν ἕνωσιν; Iamb. *Myst.* II.11.96.13–97.2) (My transl.).[1]

Michael Psellus in his "Interpretation/*Exegesis* of the *Chaldaean Oracles*," explaining the *Chald. Or. Fr.* 110,[2] "by uniting ritual action with sacred word" ('ἱερῷ λόγῳ ἔργον ἑνώσας' 110.3), states that "... but this sacred word is unable to lead to the highest ascending and receiving of the divine. Hence, the sacred word leads this one to the god through illuminations from there (/the divine world), the Chaldaean on the other hand (leads to the god) through the *telestic* science. Thus the *telestic*/ritualistic science is that which accomplishes the soul through the power of the materials here (/the enmattered world)." (... ἀλλ' οὗτος ὁ ἱερὸς λόγος ἀδυνατεῖ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς τὴν ὑψηλοτέραν ἀναγωγὴν καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ θείου παράληψιν. καὶ ὁ μὲν τῆς εὐσεβείας λόγος χειραγωγεῖ τοῦτον πρὸς θεὸν διὰ τῶν ἐκεῖθεν ἐλλάμψεων, ὁ δὲ Χαλδαῖος διὰ τῆς τελεστικῆς ἐπιστήμης. τελεστικὴ δὲ ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶν ἡ οἷον τελοῦσα τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐνταῦθ' ὑλῶν δυνάμεως). (*Opusc.* 38. pp. 131.24–132.5/*PG* 122. 1129 D 12, 1132 A 9).[3]

In magical literature the theurgic union is justified by the magician's knowledge of the forms, the symbols and the secret names of the god invoked. For example in "The erotic binding spell of Astrapsoukos" (VIII.1–63) addressed to Hermes the theurgic union is justified by the magician's knowledge of the god Hermes, his signs and symbols: (the magician knows) "the names for you (Hermes) in heaven"; "I know also your forms," οἶδά σου καὶ τὰς μορφάς, "I know

1 Also Iamb. *Myst.* IX.1, 5, 9. On the distinction between the Plotinian mystical union and the union with the divine in magic and theurgy see Dodds (1951) 286, 302; see also Dodds (1928) 141ff. For Plotinus the divine union with the god in philosophy is accomplished by the contemplation of god and beauty; Plot. *Enn.* I.6.9.33–35: Γενέσθω δὴ πρῶτον θεοειδὴς πᾶς καὶ καλὸς πᾶς, εἰ μέλλει θεάσασθαι θεόν τε καὶ καλόν; also Plot. *Enn.* VI.7.34. On Platonic concept of mystic union-initiation see Chpt. 8, sect. 3.2 and n. 10; also Chpt. 10, sect. 1.2 and n. 13; on the Orphic mystic rites of the initiates see Chpt. 7, sect. 1 and n. 5; on Egyptian mystic union see Chpt. 3 and nn. 8, 18, 30.

2 Places (1971); Lewy (1978); Majercik (1989). See also Kroll (1894).

3 Duffy and O'Meara (1989) 131–132.

(οἶδά σου) also your wood" and "I know (οἶδά σου) also your barbarian names" (VIII.6–15 and 20–21).[4]

Proclus' *On the Hieratic Art* provides the example of the kindling of the wick (θρυαλλίδα) to explain the four stages of the theurgic union with the divine and especially the final ones (Procl. *Hier. Ar.* 2.5–9).[5] These four important stages in the theurgic union of the individual with the divine are: First, "the preparatory warming" (ἡ μὲν προθέρμανσις) based on "sympathy" (τῇ συμπαθείᾳ). Second, "the approach and the good positioning" (ἡ δὲ προσαγωγὴ καὶ ἐν καλῷ θέσις) based on "the use of the materials of the hieratic art at the proper time and in the right way" (κατά τε καιρὸν τὸν πρέποντα καὶ τρόπον τὸν οἰκεῖον προσχρήσει τῶν ὑλῶν).[6] Third, "the transmission of the fire" (ἡ δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς διάδοσις) based on "the presence of the divine light" (τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ θείου φωτός). Fourth, "the kindling (/lighting)" (ἡ δὲ ἔξαψις) based on "the divinisation of mortals" (τῇ θειώσει τῶν θνητῶν) and "the illumination of things enmattered" (τῇ περιλάμψει τῶν ἐνύλων).

> Ἀναλόγως οὖν *ἡ μὲν προθέρμανσις* νοείσθω σοι *τῇ συμπαθείᾳ* τῶν τῇδε πρὸς ἐκεῖνα, *ἡ δὲ προσαγωγὴ καὶ ἐν καλῷ θέσις τῇ* τῆς ἱερατικῆς τέχνης κατά τε καιρὸν τὸν πρέποντα καὶ τρόπον τὸν οἰκεῖον *προσχρήσει τῶν ὑλῶν, ἡ δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς διάδοσις τῇ παρουσίᾳ* τοῦ θείου φωτὸς εἰς τὸ δυνάμενον μετέχειν, *ἡ δὲ ἔξαψις τῇ θειώσει* τῶν θνητῶν καὶ *τῇ περιλάμψει* τῶν ἐνύλων, ἃ δὴ κινεῖται πρὸς τὸ ἄνω λοιπὸν κατὰ τὸ μετασχεθὲν ὑπ' αὐτῶν σπέρμα θεῖον, ὥσπερ τὸ τῆς ἐξαφθείσης θρυαλλίδος φῶς. (Procl. *Hier. Ar.* 2.9–16)
>
> Thus you should understand the preparatory warming to be analogous to the sympathy of things here to things there, the approach and the good positioning [to be analogous] to the use of the materials of the hieratic art at the proper time and in the right way, the transmission of the fire [to be analogous] to the presence of the divine light to that which is able to receive it, the kindling [to be analogous] to the divinisation of mortals and the illumination of things enmattered, which are subsequently moved to the higher place according to the divine seed in which they participate, just as it is with the light of the kindled wick. (My transl.)[7]

Iamblichus refers to the theurgic prayers (τὸ τῶν εὐχῶν) as an important part of the sacrifices, because through the prayers the whole process of sacrifice

4 E.g., also *PGM* III.612–631 and VII.478–490. See Pachoumi (2018).

5 See sect. 3 below.

6 On the importance of practicing magic rituals in the right place and time see Pachoumi (2013) 46–69, at 49–50.

7 All translations from the Greek are my own.

is reinforced and accomplished, and a common contribution is made to the cult. The prayers also contribute to "the indissoluble hieratic community with the gods" (τὴν κοινωνίαν ἀδιάλυτον … τὴν ἱερατικὴν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς). These prayers may precede the sacrifices, or may come in the middle of the theurgic operation, or they may even "bring the sacrifices into completion" (τὸ τέλος τῶν θυσιῶν ἀποπληροῖ) (Iamb. *Myst*. v.26.1–9 and 23–26). The first stage of the theurgic prayer is "the one which brings together/attracts" (τὸ συναγωγόν), the second is "the conjunctive one" (τὸ συνδετικόν), and the third one is "the ineffable union" (ἡ ἄρρητος ἕνωσις), which is associated with fire and described as "the perfect accomplishment of (the soul through) the fire." (Iamb. *Myst*. v.26.9–23).

> Φημὶ δὴ οὖν ὡς τὸ μὲν πρῶτον τῆς εὐχῆς εἶδός ἐστι συναγωγόν, συναφῆς τε τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον καὶ γνωρίσεως ἐξηγούμενον· τὸ δ' ἐπὶ τούτῳ κοινωνίας ὁμονοητικῆς συνδετικόν, δόσεις τε προκαλούμενον τὰς ἐκ θεῶν καταπεμπομένας πρὸ τοῦ λόγου, καὶ πρὸ τοῦ νοῆσαι τὰ ὅλα ἔργα ἐπιτελούσας· τὸ δὲ τελεώτατον αὐτῆς ἡ ἄρρητος ἕνωσις ἐπισφραγίζεται, τὸ πᾶν κῦρος ἐνιδρύουσα τοῖς θεοῖς, καὶ τελέως ἐν αὐτοῖς κεῖσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν παρέχουσα. Ἐν τρισὶ δὲ τούτοις ὅροις, ἐν οἷς τὰ θεῖα πάντα μετρεῖται, τὴν πρὸς θεοὺς ἡμῶν φιλίαν συναρμόσασα καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν θεῶν ἱερατικὸν ὄφελος τριπλοῦν ἐνδίδωσι, τὸ μὲν εἰς ἐπίλαμψιν τεῖνον, τὸ δὲ εἰς κοινὴν ἀπεργασίαν, τὸ δὲ εἰς τὴν τελείαν ἀποπλήρωσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ πυρός· (Iamb. *Myst*. v.26.9–23)
>
> So, I say that the first stage of prayer is the one which brings together (/attracts), which leads to contact and acquaintance with the divine; the second (stage) is the conjunctive, producing a community of one mind (/a union with it), calling forth contributions sent down by the gods before the request and having accomplished all actions before their conceiving; and the most perfect (stage) has been marked as the ineffable union, which establishes all authority in the gods and provides that the soul rests perfectly in them. In these three stages in which all divine things are measured out, the prayer establishes our friendship with the gods and provides the triple hieratic benefit from the gods, the first leading to illumination, the second to the common achievement, and the third to the perfect accomplishment of (the soul through) the fire. (My transl.)

Thus, both Proclus and Iamblichus associate the last stages of the theurgic union of the soul with the Chaldaean concept of fire of divine power and light. Proclus, as examined, describes the third stage of the theurgic union as "the

transmission of the fire" (ἡ δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς διάδοσις) based on "the presence of the divine light" (τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ θείου φωτός), and the fourth one as, "the kindling" (ἡ δὲ ἔξαψις) based on "the divinisation of mortals" (τῇ θειώσει τῶν θνητῶν) and "illumination of things enmattered" (τῇ περιλάμψει τῶν ἐνύλων) (Procl. *Hier. Ar.* 2.9–16). Iamblichus also refers to the third stage of the theurgic union as "the ineffable union" (ἡ ἄρρητος ἕνωσις), which is associated with fire and described as "the perfect accomplishment of (the soul through) the fire." (Iamb. *Myst.* v.26.9–23). Furthermore, Proclus explains the process transmission of fire by providing the example of the kindling of the wick.

> ἱκανὴ γὰρ ἡ ὁμοιότης συνάπτειν τὰ ὄντα ἀλλήλοις· ἐπεὶ καί, εἴ τις θρυαλλίδα προθερμήνας ὑπόσχοι τῷ λυχναίῳ φωτὶ μὴ πόρρω τοῦ πυρός, ἴδοι ἂν αὐτὴν ἐξαπτομένην μὴ ψαύουσαν τοῦ πυρός, καὶ τὴν ἔξαψιν ἄνωθεν τοῦ κατωτέρω γινομένην (Procl. *Hier. Ar.* 2.5–9)
>
> For resemblance is able to join together the beings between each other; for if someone first heats up a wick and then puts it under the light of a lamp not far from the flame, he/she will see that it (wick) is inflamed, although it does not touch the fire, and that the kindling (/lighting) of the lower proceeds from above. (My transl.)

3 Proclus' *Chaldaean Philosophy* on Fire and the Last Stage(-s) of Proclus' Theurgic Union

The Chaldaean concept of immaculate divine fire and its connection to the divine union of the soul is attested in Proclus' preserved fragments/extracts of his lost commentary on *Chaldaean Philosophy* (/*Extraits du Commentaire de Proclus sur la Philosophie Chaldaïque*) extracts 1 and 2.[8]

> ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων μερὶς πῶς ἀνάγει ψυχήν; *φέγγουσα, φησί, πυρὶ τὴν ψυχήν*, τοῦτ' ἔστι περιλάμπουσα αὐτὴν πανταχόθεν, καὶ *πλήρη ποιοῦσα τοῦ ἀχράντου πυρὸς* ὃ ἐνδίδωσιν αὐτῇ τάξιν ἄκλιτον καὶ δύναμιν δι' ἣν οὐκ ἐκροιζεῖται εἰς τὴν ὑλικὴν ἀταξίαν ἀλλὰ συνάπτεται τῷ φωτὶ τῶν θείων· … Τέλος δὲ τῶν ἀνόδων ἡ μετουσία τῶν θείων καρπῶν καὶ *ἡ αὐτοφαὴς τοῦ πυρὸς ἀποπλήρωσις*, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ θεοῦ ὄψις, ὡς ὑπ' ὄμμασιν αὐτὴν τιθεῖσα τοῦ Πατρός. *Ὑμνῳδὸς* δὲ ἀποτελεῖται τῶν θείων ἡ ψυχή, κατὰ τὸ λόγιον, *τὰ συνθήματα τοῦ Πατρὸς τὰ ἄρρητα προβαλλομένη* καὶ προσφέρουσα αὐτὰ τῷ Πατρί, ἃ ἐνέθετο ὁ Πατὴρ

8 Pitra (1888) v: 192–195; and Places (1971) 206–212.

εἰς αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ παρόδῳ τῆς οὐσίας. Τοιοῦτοι γὰρ *οἱ νοεροὶ καὶ ἀφανεῖς ὕμνοι τῆς ἀναγομένης ψυχῆς*, ἀνακινοῦντες τὴν μνήμην τῶν ἁρμονικῶν λόγων οἳ φέρουσιν *ἀπορρήτους εἰκόνας τῶν θείων ἐν αὐτῇ δυνάμεων*. (Procl. *Phil. Chald. Fr.* 1. 6–11 and 17–26)

How does the class of angels lead the soul upwards? By making *the soul shining by fire*, it is said, that means illuminating it all around and making it (the soul) *to be full of immaculate fire*, which gives it undeviating order and power, through which it is not rushed forth into the material disorder, but it is united with the divine light; … The highest point of (the various stages of) the ascent is participation in the divine fruits and *self-illuminating fulfilment of the fire*, which is the vision (/image) of god, since it (the soul) is set under the eyes of the Father. *By singing hymns* to the divine, the soul is fulfilled, according to the Oracle, *setting forth the ineffable passwords of the Father* and offering them (passwords) to the Father, those which the Father has put into it (the soul) in its first passage (/appearance) into substance. *For such are the intellectual and invisible hymns of the ascending soul*, stirring up the memory of verbal formulas (/formative forces) which carry *ineffable images of divine powers with it* (*the soul*).[9] (My transl.)

In extract 2, lines 22–30 of Proclus' *Chaldaean Philosophy*, also known as Proclus' *Hymn to the God* or the *Fire-song*:[10]

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9 On the theurgic *enthusiasmos* of the soul and statues see Hermias *In Phaedr.* 87.4–32: Πῶς μὲν οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ ἐνθουσιᾷ, εἴρηται. Πῶς δὲ καὶ ἄγαλμα λέγεται ἐνθουσιᾶν; Ἡ αὐτὸ μὲν οὐκ ἐνεργεῖ περὶ τὸ θεῖον, ὅ γε ἄψυχόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὕλην ἡ τελεστικὴ διακαθήρασα καί τινας χαρακτῆρας καὶ σύμβολα περιθεῖσα τῷ ἀγάλματι πρῶτον μὲν ἔμψυχον αὐτὸ διὰ τούτων ἐποίησε καὶ ⟨οἷόν τε⟩ ζωήν τινα ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου καταδέξασθαι, ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο ἐλλαμφθῆναι παρὰ τοῦ θείου αὐτὸ παρεσκεύασεν· … τὸ δὲ αἴτιον ὅτι ἡ μὲν ψυχὴ ἐμφορουμένη αὐτὴ ἐνεργεῖ περὶ τὸ θεῖον, διὸ ἀποκάμνει ὑπὲρ τὴν ἑαυτῆς δύναμιν ἐνεργοῦσα (ἦ γὰρ ἂν ἦν θεὸς καὶ ὁμοία ταῖς τῶν ἄστρων ψυχαῖς, εἰ μὴ ἀπέκαμνε), τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα ὡς ἂν πάθῃ οὕτω μένει ἐλλαμπόμενον, διὸ καὶ ἡ ἀνεπιτηδειότης αὐτοῦ εἰς στέρησιν παντελῆ χωρεῖ, ἐὰν μὴ πάλιν ἐκ νέας ὑπὸ τοῦ τελεστοῦ τελεσθῇ καὶ ἐμψυχωθῇ. Ὅτι μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸ ἓν τῆς ψυχῆς γίνεται ὁ κυρίως ἐνθουσιασμὸς καὶ ὅτι ἐπίπνοια καὶ ἔλλαμψίς ἐστι τῶν θεῶν, ἱκανῶς εἴρηται; also 88.1–34.

10 Lewy (1978) 114–115, Excursus IX. See also Proclus' Hymn 4. 1–7, ΥΜΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΥΣ: Κλῦτε, θεοί, σοφίης ἱερῆς οἴηκας ἔχοντες, οἳ ψυχὰς μερόπων ἀναγώγιον *ἁψάμενοι πῦρ* ἕλκετ' ἐς ἀθανάτους, σκότιον κευθμῶνα λιπούσας ὕμνων ἀρρήτοισι καθηραμένας τελετῇσι. κλῦτε, σαωτῆρες μεγάλοι, ζαθέων δ' ἀπὸ βίβλων νεύσατ' ἐμοὶ φάος ἀγνὸν ἀποσκεδάσαντες ὁμίχλην, ὄφρα κεν εὖ γνοίην θεὸν ἄμβροτον ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα; also Hymn 1.1, ΕΙΣ ΗΛΙΟΝ: Κλῦθι, *πυρὸς* νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ, χρυσήνιε Τιτάν. On Proclus' *Hymns* 1–7, Vogt (1957); also Berg (2001).

> Ὕμνον οὖν τῷ θεῷ τοῦτον ἀναθῶμεν· καταλίπωμεν τὴν ῥέουσαν οὐσίαν· ἔλθωμεν ἐπὶ τὸν ἀληθῆ σκοπόν, *τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐξομοίωσιν*· γνωρίσωμεν τὸν δεσπότην, ἀγαπήσωμεν τὸν Πατέρα· καλοῦντι πεισθῶμεν· τῷ θερμῷ προσδράμωμεν, τὸ ψυχρὸν ἐκφυγόντες· *πῦρ γενώμεθα, διὰ πυρὸς ὁδεύσωμεν*. Ἔχομεν εὔλυτον ὁδὸν εἰς ἀνέλευσιν· Πατὴρ ὁδηγεῖ, *πυρὸς ὁδοὺς ἀναπτύξας* … (Procl. *Phil. Chald. Fr.* 2. 22–30)
>
> So, let us dedicate to God this hymn; let us leave behind the flowing substance; let us come to our true aim, *the assimilation with Him* (τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐξομοίωσιν); let us come to know the Master, let us love the Father; let us get persuaded by Him who calls us; let us run towards the heat, fleeing from the cold; *let us become fire, let us walk through the fire*; we have a free way for ascending; The Father guide us, *unfolding ways of fire* …[11] (My transl.)

Proclus himself, according to Marinus' *Proclus' life*, at the beginning of his forty-second year had uttered in a loud voice about fire and the immortality of his soul: "My soul has come breathing the spirit of fire / And writhing in fire having thrown the mind to the aether, / It rises up and clamours the starrich orbits of the immortal (soul)[12] (Ψυχή μοι πνείουσα πυρὸς μένος εἰλήλουθεν, / Καὶ νόον ἀμπετάσασα πρὸς αἰθέρα πυρσοέλικτος / Ὄρνυται, ἀθανάτης δὲ βρέμει πολυτειρέα κύκλα, Marin. *Vit. Procl.* 28.696–698).[13]

Regarding the concept of *assimilation* with the divine (cf. ἐξομοίωσις in Procl. *Phil. Chald. Fr.* 2 above), in the final stages of the theurgic union of the magico-theurgic "Erotic binding spell of Astrapsoukos" (VIII.1–63), the magician's secret knowledge of the god Hermes reaches the level of assimilation with the divine at the end of the invocation, when the magician asserts: "for you are I and I am you, your name is mine and mine is yours," σὺ γὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ

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11 Plot. *Enn.* IV.4.41.11–15: *οἷον εἰ πῦρ τις ἐκ πυρὸς λαβὼν ἔβλαψεν ἄλλον ὁ μηχανησάμενος † ἢ ἐλθεῖν † ἢ ὁ λαβὼν ἐκεῖνος ποιεῖ τῷ δεδωκέναι γοῦν τι οἷον μετατιθέν τι ἐξ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλο· καὶ τὸ ἐληλυθὸς δέ, εἰ μὴ οἷός τε ἐγένετο δέξασθαι εἰς ὃν μετηνέχθη*. Also, Iamb. *Myst.* II.10.44: Εἰ γὰρ τὰ ἀποπίπτοντα ἔργα τῆς αὐτοφανοῦς δείξεως τοιαῦτά ἐστιν οἷα σὺ λέγεις ἀλαζονικὰ καὶ ψευδῆ, τὰ τῶν ἀληθινῶν ἀθλητῶν περὶ τὸ *πῦρ* γνήσιά τέ ἐστι καὶ ἀληθινά.

12 See also Procl. *in R.* II. 220.7–15: καίτοι γε οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς ὅτι καὶ τοῖς μέσον τῶν ἑπτὰ τὸν ἥλιον εἰποῦσιν ἀστρονόμοις οὐ πάνυ δι' ἀναγκαίων τοῦτο δέδεικται λημμάτων· ὅπως δὲ ὅλως ἐπεχείρησαν, εἴπομεν ἐν ⟨τοῖς εἰς Τίμαιον⟩ [p. 257f sqq.] ἱκανῶς· ἀλλὰ ⟨τῶν παρὰ Χαλδαίοις θεουργῶν⟩ ἀκούσας, ὡς ἄρα ὁ ⟨θεὸς ἐμεσεμβόλησεν τὸν ἥλιον ἐν τοῖς ἑπτὰ καὶ ἀνεκρέμασεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὰς ἓξ ἄλλας ζώνας,⟩ καὶ τῶν ⟨θεῶν⟩ αὐτῶν, ὅτι τὸ ἡλιακὸν πῦρ ⟨κραδίης τόπῳ ἐστήριξεν⟩…

13 Masullo (1985); Boissonade (1814).

ἐγὼ σύ, τὸ σὸν ὄνομα ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ ἐμὸν σόν (VIII.36–37),[14] and then again: "I know you, Hermes, and you me. I am you and you are I," οἶδα σε, Ἑρμῆ, καὶ σὺ ἐμέ. ἐγώ εἰμι σὺ καὶ σὺ ἐγώ (VIII.49–50).[15] The theurgic union and identification between the magician and the god is justified further: "for you are I and I am you, your name is mine and mine is yours; for I am your image (ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι τὸ εἴδωλόν σου)" (VIII.36–38).[16] The magician's concept of himself as the εἴδωλον of Hermes alludes to Dionysiac mystical ideas and the mirror image of the "souls of men" who see their "images," εἴδωλα "as if in the mirror of Dionysus," οἷον Διονύσου ἐν κατόπτρῳ, as expressed by Plotinus (Plot. *Enn*. IV.3.12).[17]

4 The *Chaldaean Oracles* on Fire, and the Final Stage(-s) of the Theurgic Union

The Chaldaean concept of primordial divine fire and light and its association to the soul in the theurgic union is illustrated in various fragments of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which are a compilation of fragments consisting of quotes

14 Also in *PGM* XIII.734–1077: "you may enter my *nous* and my *phrenes* for all the time of my life and you may accomplish for me all the wishes of my soul," εἰσέλθοις τὸν ἐμὸν νοῦν καὶ τὰς ἐμὰς φρένας εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον τῆς ζωῆς μου καὶ ποιήσαις μοι πάντα τὰ θελήματα τῆς ψυχῆς μου (XIII.791–794), "for you are I and I am you," σὺ γὰρ εἶ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ σύ (XIII.795). See also similar identifications in the *Corpus Hermeticum* V, "A discourse of Hermes to his son Tat" 11: σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὃ [ε]ἂν ὦ, σὺ εἶ ὃ ἂν ποιῶ, σὺ εἶ ὃ ἂν λέγω, "for you are whatsoever I am, you are whatsoever I do, you are whatsoever I say"; Also in *Nag Hammadi* Library, "Gospel of Thomas II.2. 108"; In *Cologne Mani Codex* 24.11–16: ἐπέγνων μὲν αὐτὸν καὶ συνῆκα ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐγώ εἰμι ἐξ οὗ διεκρίθην. ἐπεμαρτύρησα δὲ ὅτι ἐγὼ ἑκε[ῖ]νος αὐτός εἰμι ἀκλό[νητο]ς ὑπάρχων … "I recognized him and I understood that I am he, whom I was separated from. I testified that I myself am he and that I am unshaken"; Henrichs and Koenen (1975) 27 and 80, n. 59 and Henrichs (1979) 340.

15 Regarding the Egyptian identification with the divine, the Eighteenth Dynasty noble Paheri at el-Kab writes in his tomb: "I know the god who is in (*imy*) mankind, since I perceive him"; Sethe (1907) 119/15. In the earliest religious literature of Egypt, the *Pyramid Texts*, deities who would assist the king's ascent to heaven were threatened by priests and practitioners. For example, in the 'slanderous' formula of the *Pyramid Texts* spell 539 "It is she who said … She, NN, said, not I," a technique of "ritual blame shifting," as described by Ritner, the ritualist is careful to shift any blame by employing the principle of divine identification. Faulkner (1969) 208. Ritner (1995) 3333–3379, esp. 3368–3373. Also see Chpt. 3 and nn. 8, 18, 30.

16 See also Gen 1:24; *Corp. Herm. Excerpt.* VIII (3); also *Corp. Herm. Excerpt.* XV (and n. 84); see Betz (1981) 166–167; also *Corp. Herm.* V (6); also *Act Joan* 95: 16ff.; see also "The Prayer of Deliverance" (I.195–222) at I.211–212. Also, Paul's second Letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 4:4).

17 See Nonn. *D.* 6.169–206; *OF* 309; Vernant (1990) 468ff. See also Procl. *Inst.* 185 and 195.

and comments by Neoplatonist philosophers from the third to the sixth centuries CE of a lost original collection of hexametrical verses, which allegedly was composed or compiled by Julian the Chaldaean, or his son Julian the Theurgist in the second-century CE. Most of the fragments of the *Chaldaean Oracles*[18] are Proclus' quotations and comments. Regarding Proclus' study of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Marinus in *Proclus' life* reports that Syrianus organised a seminar on the Orphic and Chaldaean theology at the Academy in Athens and asked his disciples Proclus and the Syrian philosopher Domninus to expound either on the works of Orpheus or the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and Proclus chose the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Marinus mentions that Proclus took five years to complete this task, following the instructions of his teacher and carefully studying the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus on the *Chaldaean Oracles*, as well as the *Oracles* themselves and other Chaldaean treatises and commentaries (Mar. *Vit. Procl.* 26). Proclus also had a good understanding of the whole theology of Greeks and the Barbarians (Mar. *Vit. Procl.* 22). He characteristically used to say that if he could choose of all the ancient books which ones he could have kept, these would have been only the *Chaldaean Oracles* and *Timaeus* (τὰ λόγια καὶ τὸν Τίμαιον, Mar. *Vit. Procl.* 38).

The following fragments illustrate the concept of fire and its association to the soul: "making the soul shining *with fire*" (τὴν ψυχὴν φέγγουσα *πυρί*, the *Chald. Or. Fr.* 122.1/Procl. *Phil.Chald.* 192.14–15),[19] "because the soul, *being a shining fire* by the power of the father, remains immortal and master of life and it is full with many wombs/vaginas of the world" (Ὅττι ψυχή, *πῦρ* δυνάμει πατρὸς οὖσα φαεινόν, ἀθάνατός τε μένει καὶ ζωῆς δεσπότις ἐστὶν καὶ ἴσχει ⟨κόσμου⟩ πολλῶν πληρώματα κόλπων, *Fr.* 96.1–3/Psel. *PG* 122.1141c 7–9), "all have been generated *from one fire*" (εἰσὶν πάντα *ἑνὸς πυρὸς* ἐκγεγαῶτα, *Fr.* 10.1/Psel. *PG* 122.1145a 4), and "for the mortal who has approached *the fire* will hold the light from the god" (*τῷ πυρὶ* γὰρ βρότος ἐμπελάσας θεόθεν φάος ἕξει, *Fr.* 121.1/Procl. *In Ti.* I.211.21).[20]

18 More than half of the fragments of the *Chaldaean Oracles* collection (about 115 out of 226) are Proclus' quotations and comments; Paces (1971). See also Lewy (1978) 72.

19 Places (1971); Lewy (1978); Majercik (1989). See also Kroll (1894).

20 *Chald. Or. Fr.* 2.1–4; *Fr.* 3.1–2: … ὁ πατὴρ ἥρπασσεν ἑαυτόν, οὐδ' ἐν ἑῇ δυνάμει νοερᾷ κλείσας *ἴδιον πῦρ*; *Fr.* 5.1–4: … οὐ γὰρ ἐς ὕλην *πῦρ* ἐπέκεινα τὸ πρῶτον ἐὴν δύναμιν κατακλείει ἔργοις ἀλλὰ νόῳ· νοῦ γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμου τεχνίτης πυρίου; *Fr.* 6.1–2: ὡς γὰρ ὑπεζωκώς τίς ὑμὴν νοερὸς διακρίνει, *πῦρ πρῶτον καὶ πῦρ ἕτερον* σπεύδοντα μιγῆναι. *Fr.* 32.1–4; *Fr.* 33.1–2; *Fr.* 34.1–4: on πυρὸς ἄνθος; *Fr.* 35.1–4: on πυρὸς ἄνθος; *Fr.* 36.1–2; *Fr.* 37.1–16: on πυρὸς ἄνθος; *Fr.* 38.1; *Fr.* 39.1–5; *Fr.* 42.1–3: on πυρὸς ἄνθος; *Fr.* 47.1; 51.1–3; 58.1; 60.1–2; 65.1–2; 66.1; 67.1; 68.1–3; 73.1–3; 76.1–3; 81.1; 85.1; 126.1; 128.1–2; 133.1–2; 48.1–3; 130.1–4; and *Fr.* 223.1–5: Τοὺς μὲν ἀπορρήτοις ἐρύων ἴυγξιν ἀπ' αἴθρης ῥηϊδίως ἀέκοντας ἐπὶ χθόνα τήνδε κατῆγες, τοὺς δὲ μέσους μεσάτοισιν ἐπεμβεβαῶτας ἀήταις νόσφι *πυρὸς θείοιο* πανομφέας ὥσπερ ὀνείρους εἰσκρίνεις μερόπεσσιν, ἀεικέα δαίμονας ἔρδων.

In *Fragment* 146 of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, also included in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, the theurgist when invoking the deity has fiery apparitions similar to a rich light, or the image of a child riding a horse, or a horse itself.

> … ταῦτ' (γάρ φησιν) ἐπιφωνήσας ἢ *παιδὶ κατόψῃ πῦρ ἴκελον* σκιρτηδὸν ἐπ' ἠέρος οἶδμα τιταῖνον· ἢ καὶ *πῦρ ἀτύπωτον*, ὅθεν φωνὴν προθέουσαν· ἢ *φῶς πλούσιον* ἀμφὶ γύην ῥοιζαῖον ἑλιχθέν· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἵππον ἰδεῖν φωτὸς πλέον ἀστράπτοντα ἢ καὶ παῖδα θοοῖς νώτοις ἐποχούμενον ἵππου, *ἔμπυρον ἢ χρυσῷ πεπυκασμένον ἢ πάλι γυμνόν*, ἢ καὶ τοξεύοντα καὶ ἑστηῶτ' ἐπὶ νώτοις. (*Chald. Or. Fr.* 146.2–8/Procl. *in R.* I.111.2–12)
>
> … (for it is said) after having invoked these, you will either see *a fire similar to a child*, stretching by leaps over the swelling of air; or you will see *a formless fire* from which a voice runs forth; or you will see *an abundant light* turned itself whistling round the land; but you may even see a horse more lightening than light, or even a child riding upon the quick back of a horse, *fiery or covered with gold or again naked*, or even shooting and standing on the back. (My transl.)

Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, which actually precedes the above mentioned passage, refers to all the hieratic treatises (ταῖς ἱερατικαῖς ἁπάσαις πραγματείαις) and rites and the mysteries and the epiphanies of the gods (ταῖς τελεταῖς καὶ τοῖς μυστηρίοις καὶ ταῖς τῶν θεῶν ἐπιφανείαις), stating that, "For in all these, the gods put forward many forms of themselves, and they are seen to be changing into many shapes; and then it appears their formless light, sometimes having taken a human form, others having advanced a different form. The ⟨god-given mystical doctrine⟩ reports these too." (ἐν ἅπασι γὰρ τούτοις οἱ θεοὶ πολλὰς μὲν ἑαυτῶν προτείνουσι μορφάς, πολλὰ δὲ σχήματα ἐξαλλάττοντες φαίνονται· καὶ τότε μὲν ἀτύπωτον αὐτῶν προβέβληται φῶς, τότε δὲ εἰς ἀνθρώπου μορφὴν ἐσχηματισμένον, τότε δὲ εἰς ἀλλοῖον τύπον προεληλυθός. καὶ ταῦτα καὶ ἡ ⟨θεοπαράδοτος μυσταγωγία⟩ παραδίδωσιν· Procl. *in R.* I.110.21–29–111.1–2).

Fiery apparitions are generally associated with divine revelations and epiphanies in magic literature. For example, in the "Lunar spell of Klaudianus and ritual of heaven and the Bear constellation over lunar offerings" (*PGM* VII.862–918), the epiphany of the goddess Selene is associated with a fiery vision of the goddess. The magician summons "Mistress Selene the Egyptian" (VII.871) to send her "sacred angel or assistant" (ἱερὸν ἄγγελον ἢ πάρεδρον, VII.883) to become the magician's assistant. The moment of Selene's epiphany

in which the goddess is magically efficient is associated with an allusion to the visual image of a physical phenomenon, that of fire: "but when you see the goddess becoming fiery red (πυρράν), know that she is, already, attracting (ἄγει ἤδη)" (VII.889–890).[21]

In *Fr.* 146 of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (/Procl. *in R.* I.111.2–12), the visions of fire and light or boys, or archers and horses are associated with the epiphanies of Hekate.[22] Boys, or archers are invoked as *biaiothanatoi or aoroi* – the spirits of the dead who suffered a violent death, or died before their time – in the Greek magical papyri and the theurgical rites to assist the magicians/theurgists in their rituals.[23] Furthermore, Hekate is associated with horse images in the Greek magical papyri, as revealed in her epithets as "horse-faced goddess" (ἱπποπρόσωπε θεά, *PGM* IV.2549), "half-mare half-bitch" (ἱπποκύων, *PGM* IV.2614) and "earth mare" (ἵπποχθων, *PGM* IV.2755). Generally, horse images are used in magic rituals, such as "earth mare" (ἱππόχθων, *PGM* III.548–549 in the *maskelli maskello* formula; also in same formula in IV.3177, IX.10, XII.291–292, XXXVI.344, LXXVIII.10, XIXa.10–11).[24]

Marinus in *Proclus' life* reports Proclus' experience of Hekate's self-revelations after performing certain Chaldaean purification rituals, "But before these, the philosopher after being purified according to the arrangement by the Chaldaean purifications, invoked flame-like (/fiery) revelations for direct vision of Hekate, as he himself has recorded in one of his own treatises." (Πρὸ δὲ τούτων ἐν τάξει ὁ φιλόσοφος τοῖς Χαλδαϊκοῖς καθαρμοῖς καθαιρόμενος, φάσμασι μὲν Ἑκατικοῖς φωτοειδέσιν αὐτοπτουμένοις ὡμίλησεν, ὡς καῖ αὐτός που μέμνηται ἐν ἰδίω συγγράμματι. Marin. *Vit. Procl.* 28.683–686). Porphyry also in *De philosophia ex oraculis* refers to the *synthêmata* (συνθήματα) and the fiery images (πυρόεσσιν εἰδώλοις) of Hekate's revelations.[25]

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21 On the association of angels and fire, as from where they emerged, see the Jewish Book of Mysteries *Sepher Ha-Razim*; Morgan (1983) 21. On divine epiphanies and their signs see Pachoumi (2011a) 155–165.

22 On *Fr.* 146 see also discussion by Lewy (1978) 240–241; and Majercik (2013) 195–196.

23 On *aoroi* and *biaiothanatoi* see Pachoumi (2017) 41, 119–121.

24 Also, "driver of horses" (Ἱπποκελεφοκλωψ, XII.300)), "stallion" (ἵππου ἄρσενος, IV.65), "horses" (ἵππους, IV.472, 822, 2140), "horse" (ἵππος, VII.781), "hippopotamus" (ἱπποπό[τα]μον, III.524 and XIII.309, 318), and "horses" ([ἵπ]ποι, XX.18–19).

25 Porph. *De Phil. Or.* II.151. 165–173: Ἔν χρηστήριον ἔτι παραθεὶς, ὅπερ αὐτὴ ἡ Ἑκάτη πεποίηται, καταπαύσω τὸν περὶ ταύτης λόγον· Ἥδ' ἐγώ εἰμι κόρη πολυφάσματος, οὐρανόφοιτος, / ταυρῶπις, τρικάρηνος, ἀπηνὴς, χρυσοβέλεμνος, / Φοίβη ἀπειρ⟨ολεχής⟩, φαεσίμβροτος, Εἰλείθυια, / τριστοίχου φύσεως συνθήματα τρισσὰ φέρουσα· / αἰ⟨θέρα⟩ μὲν πυρόεσσιν ἐειδομένη εἰδώλοις, / ἠέρα δ' ἀργεννοῖσι τροχάσμασιν ἀμφικάθημαι· / γα⟨ῖαν⟩ ἐμῶν σκυλάκων δνοφερῷ γέ⟨νει⟩ ἡνιοχε⟨ύω⟩.

5 Magic Rituals on Fire with Chaldaean Influences and the Final Stage(-s) of the Theurgic Union

In the invocation (*PGM* IV.485–537) which contains an immortalisation ritual and is part of the so-called "Mithras Liturgy" (*PGM* IV.475–829, IV CE) (cf. ἀθανασίαν ἀξιῶ IV.477, ὁ ἀπαθανατισμὸς οὗτος, IV.748), the magician prays to the origin (γένεσις and ἀρχή)[26] and to the four elements (πνεύμα, πῦρ, ὕδωρ and οὐσία γεώδης, IV.485–494), with fire, πῦρ described as "the sacred fire" (*τὸ ἱερὸν πῦρ*, IV.512) and "fire, given by god to my mixture of the mixtures in me" (*πῦρ*, τὸ εἰς ἐμὴν κρᾶσιν τῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ κράσεων θεοδώρητον, IV.490–491).[27] The aim of the immortalisation ritual is: "in order that I may oversee *the immortal principle* (τὴν ἀθάνατον ἀρχήν) with the immortal spirit ... with the immortal water ... with the firmest air ... in order that I may be born again in thought... and the sacred spirit may breathe in me ... in order that I may marvel at *the sacred fire* (τὸ ἱερὸν πῦρ) ... in order that I may gaze upon the unfathomable, frightful water of the dawn ... and the life-giving and encompassing ether may hear me" (ἵνα ... ἐποπτεύσω *τὴν ἀθάνατον ἀρχὴν* τῷ ἀθανάτῳ πνεύματι ... τῷ ἀθανάτῳ ὕδατι ... τῷ στερεωτάτῳ ἀέρι ... ἵνα νοήματι μεταγεν⟨ν⟩ηθῶ ... καὶ πνεύσῃ ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸ ἱερὸν πνεῦμα ... ἵνα θαυμάσω *τὸ ἱερὸν πῦρ* ... ἵνα θεάσωμαι τὸ ἄβυσσον τῆς ἀνατολῆς φρικτὸν ὕδωρ ... καὶ ἀκούσῃ μου ὁ ζωογόνος καὶ περικεχυμένος αἰθήρ, IV.502–515).[28]

The reference to φρικτὸν ὕδωρ, "frightful water" alludes to the phrase of the Orphic gold tablets ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ, "frigid water," as for example: ψυχρὸν ὕδορ (12) in the Orphic gold tablet from Hipponion (400 BCE), ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ (9) in the Orphic gold tablet from Petelia (4th c. BCE), [ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ] (14) in the Orphic gold tablet from Entella (3rd c. BCE); and ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ (5) in the Orphic gold tablet from Pharsalos (350–300 BCE).[29]

Regarding the concept of fire, in the Chaldaean system the cosmos is divided into three world-circles, "the empyrean, the ethereal and the hylic" (⟨πυρίη γ' ἠδ' αἰθερίη καὶ ὑλώδης⟩, *Chald. Or. Fr.* 76.3/Damasc. II.59.23–25,

26 *PGM* IV.485ff.: [Γ]ένεσις πρώτη τῆς ἐμῆς γενέσεως ... ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐμῆς ἀρχῆ⟨ς⟩ πρώτη.

27 Betz supports the notion that the reference to the four elements here implies influences from the Pre-Socratics and, particularly, Empedocles, and from Stoic cosmology. On the four elements and κρᾶσις see the discussion in Betz (2003) 105 and 107–108; also Dieterich (1891) 57–60 and 83ff.; Dieterich (1966) 55, 58ff., 78ff.; Merkelbach and Totti (1992) III: 234; Kingsley (1996) 374–375.

28 Betz following Dieterich argues for Stoic influences on the "Mithras Liturgy" (IV.475–829). Betz (2003) 89–90, 114ff., 118; Dieterich (1966).

29 Graf and Johnston (2007).

88.3–5).[30] The concept of ἀρχή is also attested in the *Chaldaean Oracles* as "of the paternal principle" (πατρικῆς ἀρχῆς, *Chald. Or. Fr.* 13.1/Psel. *PG* 122.1145d 7), "from Zeus' principle" (ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχῆς, *Fr.* 215.3/Lyd. *De Mens.* IV.101, 141.2–11), "principle sourse" (κρηνήϊος ἀρχή, *Fr.* 74.1/Damasc. II.206.11), or "the three-winged principle" (as τὴν τρίπτερον ἀρχήν, *Fr.* 168.1/Procl. *In Crat.* 96.18–19). This three-winged principle evidently refers to the triadic Monad of the Chaldaean system (Μουνάδα γάρ σε τριοῦχον ἰδὼν ἐσεβάσσατο κόσμος, *Fr.* 26.1/Lyd. *De Mens.* II.6, 23.12), according to which, "for the Triad shines in every world, which the Monad rules," Παντὶ γὰρ ἐν κόσμῳ λάμπει τριάς, ἧς μονὰς ἄρχει (*Fr.* 27.1/Damasc. I.87.3, II.87.14).[31]

Πῦρ (fire), and ἀρχή (principle) addressed in the "Mithras Liturgy" (IV.475–829) are also important in the hymn "To Helios" (IV.939–948) included in the "*Systasis*-prayer that produces direct vision (of the divinity invoked)" ("Αὔτοπτος σύστασις," IV.930–1114, IV CE). In this hymn, Helios is invoked as φύσι καὶ πυρὸς ἀρχή, "nature and principle of fire" (IV.939).[32] In a fragment of the *Chaldaean Oracles* fire is also associated to the sun as "fire of the sun," τὸ ἡλιακὸν πῦρ (*Fr.* 58/Procl. *in R.* II.220.14–15).

Furthermore, fire is associated to Helios in another spell, *PGM* IV.959–973, also included in the "*Systasis*-prayer that produces direct vision (of the divinity invoked)" (IV.930–1114). Helios here is described as πυριφεγγῆ, "fire-blazing" and ἀόρατον φωτὸς γεννήτορα, "invisible begetter of light" (IV.960).[33] The adject-

30 *Orac. Chald. Fr.* 76.1–3/Damask. II.59.23–25, 88.3–5: Πολλαὶ μέν δὴ αἵδε ἐπεμβαίνουσι φαεινοῖς κόσμοις ἐνθρῷσκουσαι· ἐν αἷς ἀκρότητες ἔασιν τρεῖς· ⟨πυρίη γ' ἠδ' αἰθερίη καὶ ὑλώδης⟩; on the three worlds see also Lewy (1978) 137–157 and n. 270.

31 See also *Orac. Chald. Fr.* 73.1–3/Damask. II.217.8–10: Ἐν τούτοις ἱερὸς πρῶτος δρόμος, ἐν δ' ἄρα μέσσῳ ἠέριος, τρίτος ἄλλος ὃς ἐν πυρὶ τὴν χθόνα θάλπει. Ἀρχαῖς γὰρ τρισὶ ταῖσδε λάβροις δουλεύει ἅπαντα; Places (1971). See also discussion on the ideas in Lewy (1978) 105–117 and n. 164.

32 The papyrus actually reads φύσι καὶ πυρὸς ἀρχή. Herwerden (1888) retains φύσι καὶ πυρὸς ἀρχή of the papyrus. But, Dieterich (1891) emends it to φυσικαὶ πυρὸς ἀρχαί, "die Zauberzeichen des Feuers," having ἀρχαί in plural and taking φυσικαί as an adjective, thus giving a later interpretation to it as meaning magical. Preisendanz (1928) I: 104–105; Preisendanz (1973) Vol. I, 104–105. Herwerden (1888) 316–347, at 322–323. Dieterich, (1891) 51, n. 2 and 97, n. 1. I have argued that the poetic invocation to φύσι καὶ πυρὸς αρχή (IV.939) of the papyrus should not be emended to φυσικαὶ πυρὸς ἀρχαί, as Dieterich suggests and as Preisendanz adopts in his edition. Pachoumi (2014).

33 In the spell IV.587–616 included in the "Mithras Liturgy" (IV.475–829) Aion is invoked and described with many πυρι- composite epithets, e.g., πυρίπολε, πυρίπνοε, πυρίθυμε, πυριχαρῆ, πυρισώματε, πυρισπόρε, πυρικλόνε, πυριδῖνα, πυρισχησίφως (IV.591–602); see also IV.520–522: τὸν ἀθάνατον Αἰῶνα καὶ δεσπότην τῶν πυρίνων διαδημάτων. Similarly, Marinus in *Proclus' life* uses the epithets πυρισμαράγου (for θιασείης), Marin. *Vit. Procl.* 28.693 (also in Theoc. *Syrinx* 8); and πυρσοέλικτος, Marin. *Vit. Plocl.* 28.697.

ive πυριφεγγής is also used in the *Orphica* as an adjective to Helios (e.g., πυριφεγγέος Ἠελίοιο, *Orph. A.* 214).[34] It is also used by Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (e.g., ⟨σῶμα δέ οἱ πυριφεγγὲς ἀπείριτον ἀστυφέλικτον …⟩ Procl. *in Ti.* II.45.7), and in feminine plural in Proclus' *Hymn* "To Aphrodite" (e.g., πυριφεγγέας αὐλάς, 6). Helios' assimilation to fire is also established by the ritual of "light bringing" (φωταγωγία, IV.955) of the spell "*Systasis*-prayer that produces direct vision" (IV.930–1114), which involves the instilling of the god as part of the ritual of "filling with divine spirit," ἐνπνευμάτωσις of the lamp.[35]

Thus, the concepts of "sacred fire," "immortal principle" and "principle of fire" in the "Mithras Liturgy" (IV.475–829) and the "*Systasis*-prayer that produces direct vision" (IV.930–1114) reflect Chaldaean influences, as illustrated in the divine epiphanies and the immortalisation ritual of the magico-theurgic texts.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has looked at theurgic union and particularly at the concept of fire in the final stages of the theurgic union. Proclus' *On the Hieratic Art* defines the last two stages of theurgic union as "the transmission of the fire" based on "the presence of the divine light," and "the kindling" based on "the divinisation of mortals" and "the illumination of things enmattered." Similarly, Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis* describes the last stage of theurgic union as "the perfect accomplishment of (the soul through) the fire." In the last stages of the theurgic union, the soul is associated with the Chaldaean concept of fire of divine power and light. The Chaldaean concept of the sacred divine fire and its role in the divine union is also illustrated in Proclus' *Chaldaean Philosophy* and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Texts also from the magico-theurgic operations exemplify these theurgic unions.

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34 Abel (1885). In relation to Helios see Nonn. *D.* 38.85: καὶ πάλιν ἀντέλλων πυριφεγγέος ὑψόθι δίφρου/Ἠέλιος ζοφόεσσαν ἀπηκόντιζεν ὁμίχλην. See also *Hymn. Orph.* 52.9: πυριφεγγές; and *Orph. L.* 173: πυριφεγγέος ἀμβρότου αἴγλης.

35 On ἐνπνευμάτωσις see Pachoumi (2017) 20, n. 57, 45 with n. 65, 58, 84 with 110, 128 with n. 336. Also cf. Pachoumi (2011b) 729–740, at 736, n. 25.

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CHAPTER 12

Determinism and Divine Intervention: Divine Punishment in Stoic Theology

Maarten van Houte

1 Introduction

In ancient Greek and Roman religion, it was mostly taken for granted that gods could, and would, punish the wicked for their transgressions. Many philosophers who held the cosmos to be providently ordered (Plato is the prime example) subscribed to a version of this idea. Stoic natural theology and determinism, however, do not seem to leave much room for the idea of god or gods actively intervening in human affairs and inflicting impromptu punishment on criminals and vicious people. There is evidence, however, that suggests that certain Stoics did in fact hold that God can, and will, punish vicious people. It is this apparent tension between various aspects of Stoic theology that I will try to shed some light on in this paper. In what follows, I will argue that the Stoic conceptualization of divine punishment was meant to reinforce their claim that God is provident and beneficent towards all human beings. Like his namesake of traditional religion, the Stoic Zeus ensures no one can do evil with impunity, but he does more: his chastisements benefit all of us, even the ones being punished, and thus serve to bring about a morally better cosmos.

First, I will say something about divine judgement in Greek religion (section 2), then briefly discuss how this topic is taken up by various Presocratic philosophers and Plato (section 3). In section 4 I will try to reconstruct the Stoic position based on the relatively scanty evidence we have, and will conclude with a brief reflection on the rationales behind this arguably rather convoluted theory in section 5.

2 Divine Judgement in Traditional Greek Religion

Most of us tend to feel that good deeds should be rewarded and that bad deeds deserve punishment. However well-run and fair a society's legal system may be, it is never infallible: a crime may go undetected, lawyers and judges may

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be corrupt or incompetent, etc. As a result, some (or many) bad deeds will go unpunished. Bearing in mind such failings of human justice, a religious society may call on divine justice to pick up the slack and ensure, because of a god's (or the gods') omniscience and power, that such deeds do not go unpunished after all. In ancient Greek culture, as far as we can tell from the extant literary evidence, it was generally held that the gods take notice of human affairs and punish those who do wrong, and that they should do so.[1]

Though there is some disagreement between scholars when it comes to Homer (or the Mycenean culture he describes), there seems hardly any doubt that in the archaic period, "we move towards a view of the gods as omniscient moral scrutineers. It becomes their specific task to watch over – and to punish – the improprieties of mankind."[2] Hesiod claims that Zeus punishes wrongdoers and that even mighty rulers cannot carry on with their wicked ways with impunity, Zeus having in his service no less than 30,000 daemons (ἀθάνατοι φύλακες) who keep a close eye on human affairs.[3] Solon, too, affirms that Zeus sees all (13.25–28) and that ill-gotten gains ultimately have to be paid for (13.7–13).[4]

A correlate of this view of the gods as powerful and omniscient arbiters is that they are now also expected to preserve justice and punish wrongdoers. When they appear not to do so, i.e., when bad people prosper and flourish and do not pay for their crimes, the divine judgement is sometimes criticized or called into question. The poet Theognis, e.g., expresses his surprise that Zeus, despite being "lord over all" and knowing "the mind and heart of very man," apparently does not care whether we do the right thing or not, even allowing the wicked to thrive and the just to live in poverty.[5] Several passages in Euripides' tragedies convey the sentiment that divine retribution may be arbitrary

1 See Mackenzie (1981) 90; Saunders (1991) 33–34. Both works give an extensive overview of ancient Greek ideas on penology, with Saunders devoting a separate chapter to divine punishment (Chpt. 2 'Anxieties and Surrogates,' 33–76).

2 Mackenzie (1981) 92. In this work Mackenzie (now McCabe) holds that in the Homeric epics, there is *revenge* and *recompense* rather than punishment, and the gods do not operate as more or less impartial arbiters of human behavior. See e.g., 86–92. Saunders (1991) 21–32, disagrees and asserts (34) that "[t]here is plenty of evidence [...] in the *Odyssey* and in the *Iliad* [...] for the role of the gods in punishing offenders [...]." Much of their disagreement rests on differing definitions of punishment; Mackenzie, e.g., does not deny that the gods can and will intervene in human affairs, such as Apollo answering Chryses' prayer for vengeance when Agamemnon has carried off the priest's daughter Chryseis (see 71–72).

3 Hes. *Op.* 237–263.

4 For other examples in these authors and others, and further discussion, see Mackenzie (1981) 92–94 and 109; Saunders (1991) 39–49 and Griffiths (1990) 48–65.

5 Theogn. 373–387 (transl. Gerber 1999). See Mackenzie (1981) 110–111.

and unreliable,[6] and Sophocles' plays suggest that despite divine punishment of hubris and other wrongdoing, human life is unfair and unwarranted suffering unavoidable.[7]

The famous Sisyphus fragment shows that there was also scepticism about, or outright rejection of, the idea that there are gods who watch and judge everything we do.[8] This idea, the fragment states, is nothing more than a fabricated story, made up by a clever man who sought to deter the wicked when the laws no longer did. Observing that human laws are an effective deterrence to overt violence and crime, but not to covert misdeeds, this so-called clever man started telling tales about all-powerful beings perceiving and marking our every thought and act, even those that escape human scrutiny. This deterrent effect on wannabe criminals might be beneficial, but the story is a lie all the same (i.e., the gods do not actually exist or, if they do, they do not judge human behaviour).

Mackenzie distinguishes two possible counters to such scepticism about, or criticism of, the gods as custodians of justice in this life.[9] The first is to argue that divine punishment will be inflicted post-mortem. Bad people may flourish here and now, but they will ultimately pay the price for their crimes. Already in Homer, but more frequently in later poets and possibly in mystery cults as well, we find references to the post-mortem judgement of human souls by divine arbiters and the punishment of those who have misbehaved in life.[10] The second counter consists in shifting the punishment to the descendants of the wrongdoer; even though these have not done anything wrong themselves, they are guilty by association (family ties) and will suffer for their progenitor's offences. This argument then, like the first, accepts that the flourishing

6 See Saunders (1991) 50–51.

7 See Mackenzie (1981) 112; Haigh (1896) 171: "He [Sophocles] cannot shut his eyes to the fact that, while crime is punished, innocence is not always protected, and suffering and misfortune often overtake the guiltless."

8 The fragment, cited in S.E. *M* 9.54 (DK 88B25), is named after the satyr-play by Euripides which is its probable origin. See Kahn (1997) for a discussion of its origins and background.

9 Mackenzie (1981) 92–94.

10 A famous example, e.g., is Tantalus' everlasting punishment for serving up his own son Pelops to the gods in a stew. See Saunders (1991) 53–61, for a discussion of various conceptions of post-mortem judgement and punishment (e.g., by and through reincarnation). Griffiths (1990) 53–57 and Saunders (1991) 63, discuss the role of the Erinyes or Furies as agents of divine retribution not only during life, but after death as well. Both Saunders (1991) 55 and Mackenzie (1981) n. 111, however, state that the extant evidence leaves it uncertain how wide-spread the belief in such post-mortem punishment actually was.

of many bad people is hard to deny, but maintains that divine justice will ultimately prevail.[11] Also, the prospect of children or grandchildren suffering for their sins might have a deterrent effect on prospective criminals.

These arguments for the efficacy of divine justice may accommodate the apparent fact that crime often goes unpunished, but they have problems of their own: in contrast to direct divine punishment, post-mortem punishment is not readily verifiable and does not give as much satisfaction – one has to *believe* that the culprit will someday get his just deserts. The punishment of offspring, meanwhile, still lets the wrongdoer off easy, and may seem both too late and unfair.[12]

To sum up, divine judgement and punishment seems to have been a vexed issue for the ancient Greeks: they hoped and expected the gods to persecute and punish wrongdoers, especially those who escape human justice, but they were often frustrated as well at the apparent tardiness or absence of divine intervention and the prospering of many such wrongdoers.

3 The Presocratics and Plato on Divine Punishment

Divine punishment (and its problems) became a topic of interest in ancient philosophy as well. It is not very prevalent in Presocratic philosophy, as far as we can tell, since the early thinkers typically employ a concept of the divine that seems to leave little room for any close scrutiny of human behaviour. Several Presocratics do actually claim that a cosmic justice is safeguarded by the divine principle or ἀρχή: Anaximander, e.g., says that change between opposites happens "according to necessity; for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of time,"[13] while Heraclitus claimed the ongoing strife between opposites to be just and this

11 See, e.g., Sol. 13.29–32 (Gerber 1999): "But one man pays the penalty at one, another later, and if they themselves escape the penalty and the pursuing destiny of the gods does not overtake them, it assuredly comes at another time; the innocent (ἀναίτιοι) pay the penalty, either their children or a later progeny." Similarly, in Theogn. 197–208. The argument reappears in later antiquity as well, e.g., in Plutarch's *De sera numinis vindicta*. See also n. 34 below.

12 See, e.g., Theogn. 731–742. Solon, too, says that such punishment targets 'the innocent' (see n. 11). See Bonazzi (2019) for a discussion of Solon's views on divine punishment (pp. 9–11, specifically address the issue of the innocent paying the price for their ancestors' crimes).

13 DK 12B1. All translations of Presocratics taken from Kirk, Raven and Schofield (1983), unless otherwise indicated.

cosmic justice itself to be inviolable,[14] and other early thinkers had similar ideas about justice on a cosmic scale.[15]

Their focus on cosmogony and cosmology often leaves it unclear if, and how, this divine justice is upheld on a *human* level.[16] One of the most explicit thinkers here is probably Empedocles, who holds that souls could be punished by 'the gods' by being subjected to a long-lasting cycle of reincarnations, but even here much remains rather vague.[17] All in all, it seems that most of these early philosophers claimed some kind of divine administration of the cosmos, but were not particularly concerned with the harmonization of this cosmic governance with local injustice.

There can be little doubt, however, that this was a major concern for Plato. Although he is very reluctant to commit himself to any detailed and elaborate cosmology, his dialogues always convey a moral certainty that the cosmos is well-run and providently administered by the gods. This divine providence entails that, in general, virtue will be rewarded and vice will be punished. As we have seen, there had always been some doubts in antiquity about this rather traditional idea, and in the fifth century, many sophists openly challenged the view that being just and law-abiding is the best choice for us.[18] Throughout his dialogues, Plato confronted this sophistic challenge in order

14 DK 22B80: "It is necessary to know that war is common and right is strife (δίκην ἔριν)" and DK 22B94: "Sun will not overstep his measures; otherwise the Erinyes, ministers of justice, will find him out."

15 According to a report in Aetius, Parmenides called the "goddess that steers" (δαίμονα κυβερνῆτιν) the cosmos 'justice' (Δίκη) as well (DK 28A37).

16 Xenophanes is a good example: he famously derided the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic gods of Greek traditional religion (DK 21B11, 14, 15, 16), claiming about the "one god, greatest among gods and men" (DK 21B23) that "all of him sees, all thinks, and all hears." (DK 21B24) This seems very close to how Hesiod, Solon and others describe Zeus' omniscience (see sect. 2 above), but we simply do not know if Xenophanes held that his god observed and judged human behaviour in the same way Zeus was supposed to do. Another example: while Heraclitus appears to have held that there is a post-mortem reward for certain souls, viz. the souls of slain warriors and others who die 'good' deaths (see DK *Fr.* 22B24, 25 and 63), the fragments are very obscure and do not say anything about post-mortem punishment of other souls.

17 DK 31B115. Recent scholarship has argued that the Pythagoreans did not regard reincarnation as punishment: see Zhmud (2012) 232–233 and Pellò (2018).

18 In the first two book *Republic*, Plato discusses such views: Thrasymachus' praise of injustice (*R.* I.343c–344c), and the contract theory, presented by Glaucon and Adeimantus, that characterizes justice not as a good but as a lesser evil and claims that the life of the unjust person is easy and comfortable (*R.* II.358b–367e). See also Antiphon, *P. Oxy.* 9.1364+3647 (*Fr.* 46a in Graham 2010, 812–813).

to defend the superiority of justice and virtue; taking the *Republic* as our guide here, we can distinguish two kinds of argument he employs.

In the first two book of the *Republic*, Socrates is presented with this problem, viz. that the unjust life seems much more attractive than the just life; the unjust person is rich and famous and need not fear the gods, because he can easily placate them with massive offerings and sacrifices (see n. 18 for the passages). Socrates ultimately replies to this challenge in two different ways:

(1): In book nine, based on his conception of the tripartite soul, he tries to convince us that the life of the unjust person is inherently worse than that of the just person: an unjust person is all torn up within himself, divided, and so injustice is its own worst enemy. Such a person may seem to be happy and prosperous, but is in fact in utter misery, since his tripartite soul is in complete disarray, there being (using Plato's own metaphor) a constant civil war between the many-headed beast, the lion and the little man in his head. According to this view, vice is its own punishment, since the vicious person suffers exactly *because of* his own vicious character, while virtue is its own reward, since a harmonious soul is a happy soul. We might call this the 'philosophical' incentive to motivate people to behave.[19]

(2) For those who are not convinced by this argument about the inherent disadvantage of injustice, Plato also points to the bad consequences of it. Here he uses an argument familiar from traditional religion, viz., that the souls of the vicious will be punished after death. The famous Myth of Er in book ten of the *Republic* (10.614–621) provides an account of what just and unjust people might find waiting for them after they die: the just people go to a heavenly place, while the unjust have to suffer the things they inflicted upon other people, but then ten times over, for a period of a thousand years (or even longer), and other dialogues have similar myths.[20]

According to most of these Platonic eschatological myths, this punishment involves both the infliction of pain and, subsequently, reincarnation into a body that befits the vicious lifestyle of the one punished.[21] In *Phaedo* Socrates suggests that gluttons, drunkards and thugs will become asses or something

19 In *Timaeus* Plato argues that this virtuous life brings the most supreme happiness, as it assimilates our soul to the divine order of the cosmos; Pl. *Ti.* 90a–d.

20 These myths (in *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws*), like the one of Er, describe the post-mortem fate of human souls: invariably, those who have done wrong in life suffer punishment after death, whether they got away with their crimes during life or not. See Mackenzie (1981) 179–206 and Saunders (1991) 196–211 for summaries of these myths.

21 Many elements of these myths, such as the reincarnation of human souls, are very similar to what we find in Pythagoreanism and (other) mystery religions. It seems likely that

similar, while tyrants and robbers are reborn as wolves or other predatory animals, and in *Phaedrus* he tells us that the more vicious and ignorant a soul is, the worse its next embodied life will be: a sophist, a tyrant or even an animal.[22] Souls can also improve, however, through their punishments and reincarnations, and might ultimately escape the cycle of death and rebirth altogether.[23] The mechanism of reincarnation allows Plato to address two concerns: firstly, it guarantees that injustice will be punished and secondly, this punishment (post-mortem suffering and/or reincarnation into a 'deserved' life-form) is *reformative* and thus beneficial, which fits Plato's view of the gods as solely the causes of *good* things (the θεός ἀναίτιος principle[24]). We might call this the 'eschatological' incentive to get people to behave.

To conclude, Plato seems intent on emphasizing that divine providence guarantees that we all get what we deserve and that it pays to be good and virtuous (or at least, to make efforts to become good and virtuous): the philosophical argument shows that justice is *inherently* better than injustice, the eschatological argument that justice will have better *consequences* than injustice. The post-mortem punishment inflicted on those who misbehave does not fall outside the scope of this providence, for it is always aimed at reformation and thus improvement of the one being punished. Even when this is no longer possible, i.e., when someone is beyond redemption and his annihilation is the only option left, this is still a beneficial outcome, as it prevents further harm to others, may deter wannabe criminals from a life of vice and may even benefit the culprit himself.[25] When we turn to the Stoics in the next section, we will see the same idea recurring: what God does is always beneficial, either to the individual or group being punished or to the rest of society (or to both).[26]

Plato has borrowed from these earlier traditions, but an estimation of their influence on his thought falls outside the scope of this paper.

22 Pl. *Phd*. 81d–82a, and *Phdr*. 248a ff.

23 See e.g., Pl. *Phd*. 81a and 84a–b, where it is said that a philosopher's soul will enjoy eternal bliss among the gods.

24 Pl. *R*. 379b–c and 617e.

25 Here I follow Sorabji (1980) 288ff., who also lists many passages in support of the view that Plato had a reformist view of punishment. See also Mackenzie (1981), esp. 214–216 and Saunders (1991) Chpt. 5, 6 and 16.

26 I will not discuss other major schools, such as the Peripatetics and Epicureans, since their systems involve little to no involvement by the gods in the administration of justice to human beings. The Epicureans, of course, rejected the whole notion of divine providence (including punishment of the wicked) and this view will be briefly discussed in what follows.

4 The Stoics on Divine Punishment

The Stoics, as is well known, claimed the goodness of the cosmos and the providential administration of it by God. Philosophical opponents, such as Epicureans or Sceptics, tried to undermine this claim by pointing to the apparent abundance of imperfections and 'things wrong' with the cosmos. Disease, earthquakes, floods, dangerous animals, war, human beings doing terrible things to one another: if this is truly the best possible cosmos, as the Stoics claimed, why did God not prevent these bad things, this evil, from happening? To face these challenges, the Stoics came up with a pretty elaborate theodicy (i.e., a justification of why such things happen, and an exculpation of God from any guilt), which boils down to the following: the only real evil is moral vice and we ourselves are responsible for it. God gave us the means to become virtuous and our abusing these means is not his responsibility. Other so-called evils or bad things, such as natural disasters, are not really evil at all, and our suffering from them is the non-intended yet unavoidable consequence of bringing about the best possible cosmos.[27]

Another aspect of theodicean problems is the same one Plato (and in general, anyone asserting divine providence) had to face, viz. that of people doing bad things with impunity: if God is good and just and cares for his creation, why does he not do a better job of chastising the vicious? In the third book of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* the Sceptic Cotta provides a list of good people that have suffered for no good reason, then another list of bad people that got away with murder or other crimes and he concludes as follows:

> [J]ust as a household or a state appears to lack all rational system and order if in it there are no rewards for right conduct and no punishments for transgression (*supplicia peccatis*), so there is no such thing at all as the divine government (*divina moderatio*) of the world if that governance makes no distinction between the good and the wicked. (Cic. *N.D.* 3.85; transl. Rackham 1951)

We have just seen that Plato has two answers to this: the philosophical one (vice is its own punishment) and the eschatological one (vicious people will suffer postmortem punishment). It seems obvious, however, that the second Platonic option is not really available to the Stoics, since their metaphysics and cosmology leaves no room (figuratively and literally) for an afterworld where

27 See e.g., Long (1968), Kerferd (1978), Wicke-Reuter (2000) 36–50, Algra (2014), esp. 123–126.

souls go to be judged. Nonetheless, most Stoics hold that souls can survive death, i.e., the separation from the body: according to Chrysippus, only the souls of the sages will survive until the next conflagration, while Cleanthes held that all souls will do so.[28] Stoics of the Imperial era are rather hesitant about the afterlife of the soul, with Seneca and Marcus Aurelius often saying that death means that the soul is either snuffed out or changed for the better – this better condition probably being that the soul will soar up and live happily among the heavenly bodies.[29]

One might consider this post-mortem survival of the soul to have served a moral purpose as well, even when there is no afterworld: live virtuously, and you will be rewarded with continued (and happy) existence right up until the next conflagration. But, first, there is hardly any evidence that the Stoics actually *did* use this theory to give us an incentive to live well (and remember that according to Cleanthes, *all* souls will survive); and second, it seems that the worst that could happen to the souls of bad people is that they fall apart (i.e., are destroyed) as soon as they are separated from the body, or at least soon after this separation.[30] Stoic theory thus seems to leave no room for post-mortem punishment of the souls of the wicked, and some Stoics even explicitly reject it.[31]

The only apparent evidence to the contrary is found in two puzzling passages in Lactantius' *The Divine Institutions*.[32] Lactantius' testimony seems to be of questionable value, however: (1) it is not corroborated by any other source

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28 D.L. 7.157 (*SVF* 1.522, 2.811), Ar. Didym. *Fr.* 39 Diels (*SVF* 2.809).

29 I agree with Rist (1989) 2004, based on the findings of Hoven (1971), that "it is clear that no single position can be affirmed as Seneca's consistent view." Seneca *is* clearly attracted by the idea of an afterlife of the soul, putting it to good use for consolatory purposes (e.g., *Marc.* 24.5, *Polyb.* 9.7, *Helv.* 11.7), but it seems safest to assume that he never fully committed to it, seeing it as a 'beautiful dream' (*bellum somnium*) as he puts it in *Ep.* 102.2. Epictetus favours the idea that when we die we simply (and entirely) dissolve into our constitutive elements (*Diss.* 3.13.14–15, 1.9.10–17); as to Marcus, in 4.21 he mentions the Chrysippean position, but in many other passages (e.g., 5.33, 6.24, 7.32 and 8.25) he simply says that death is either a change (μετάστασις) or extinction (σβέσις). See Hoven (1971) for an overview of the various Stoics' opinions on the afterlife, and Algra (2009) for a discussion of these matters in the context of Stoic demonology.

30 As said, later Stoics such as Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius consider this swift destruction (through disintegration of its constitutive πνεῦμα) as a very real possibility for *all* souls, not just those of non-sages.

31 See e.g., Sextus Empiricus (S.E. *M* 9.71) and Seneca (Sen. *Ep.* 24.18, 82.16 and *Marc.* 19.4).

32 In Lact. *Inst. Div.* 7.7 (transl. Fletcher 1995) he says that "Zeno the Stoic taught that there were infernal regions, and that the abodes of the good were separated from the wicked; and that the former enjoyed peaceful and delightful regions, but that the latter suffered punishment in dark places, and in dreadful abysses of mire"; again, in 7.20 he claims that

(though this by itself is not enough to reject it, of course); (2) implying that souls can move downwards (into "infernal regions," "dreadful abysses of mire") after death contradicts Stoic physics, according to which souls, consisting of πνεῦμα, are light and will move upwards;[33] (3) it seems to fit Platonic (rather than Stoic) eschatology, being reminiscent of, e.g., the myths in the *Phaedo* and book ten of the *Republic*. It is not unlikely that Lactantius here confuses Platonic and Stoic teachings, since in *Inst. Div*. 3.18 he certainly, and erroneously, attributes the Pythagorean (and probably Platonic) doctrine of the transmigration of souls to the Stoics.[34]

So, leaving the option of post-mortem punishment aside, let us turn to the first one: the idea that, just as virtue is its own reward, vice is its own punishment. In other words, the punishment for what bad people do does not *follow* as a consequence, but is *inherently* bound up with doing bad things; when you are vicious, you suffer from it yourself. This is the kind of punishment of the wicked that we find in the works of several Stoics, who often formulate this point in theological terms. That is, they explicitly say that such self-inflicted punishment is precisely how divine providence has ordained things to be.[35] Vicious people thus do not get away with impunity, but suffer 'divine punishment' *more Stoico*: we find this idea expressed by e.g., Epictetus (1) and Cicero (2):

> (1) There are certain punishments (κολάσεις), assigned as it were by law, for those who are disobedient to the divine dispensation. 'Whoever shall

according to the Stoics the souls of good men will have a blissful existence after being separated from the body at death, but that the souls of those who have become enslaved to the desires and lusts of the body will suffer because of this too-close association with the body.

33 S.E. *M* 9.71.

34 Lact. *Inst. Div*. 7.20, e.g., reads like a paraphrase of Pl. *Phd*. 81e. See Colish (1985) II: 44 for a discussion of these passages, and Doignon (1977). An erroneous attribution of ideas from the Platonist tradition to the Stoics may also explain Cic. *N.D*. 3.90, where the Stoics are said to have claimed that divine punishment may be visited upon the children or grandchildren of the wicked, even when these escape punishment themselves. Since (a) this passage is part of the Sceptic criticism of Stoic theology, (b) we have no other evidence to support this claim, and (c) it is an argument actually used by Platonists such as Plutarch (see Berg 2014), I regard this as a mistaken ascription to the Stoics.

35 In other words, the Stoics made explicit what in Plato's dialogues was only said *implicitly*. The difference here is explained clearly by Frede (2003) 104: "Since the Stoics conceive of their divine power as an all-pervasive *pneuma*, the main distinction between their position and Plato's consists in the fact that Stoic providence is an immanent principle in all of nature. It is not confined to the divine souls of the heavenly bodies that somehow or other (Plato is silent as to the ways and means) also care about smaller matters."

> regard as good anything but the things that fall within the scope of his moral purpose (προαίρεσις), let him envy, yearn, flatter, feel disturbed; whoever shall regard anything else as evil, let him sorrow, grieve, lament, be unhappy.' (Epict. *Diss*. 3.11.1f.)[36]

> (2) And there will be, as it were, one common teacher and ruler over all, God, who is the author, initiator, and judge of this law [i.e., natural law – MvH]. Whoever seeks to disobey it flees from himself and rejects the nature of man. And on this account, he will suffer the severest punishment, even if he otherwise escapes what are regarded as punishment. (Cic. *Rep*. 3.22.33)[37]

In other words, the wicked and decadent only *seem* to be better off than virtuous people; being vicious, they do not recognize that only virtue and reason are truly good – instead, they erroneously value indifferent things like wealth and power to be good and other indifferent things like illness and poverty to be really bad. Consequently, they will suffer from all kinds of emotions and their souls will be in constant turmoil.[38] This is also the point that Seneca makes in *De Providentia* when he says that we would be wrong to think that lazy and rich vicious people are doing well. Those who seem to lead easy lives are actually worse off, because their souls are in a bad way:

> Those you regard as fortunate, could you only see them in their hearts, not as they meet the eye, are wretched, dirty, ugly, and, like the walls of their own homes, decorated only on the outside; such felicity is not long-lasting or genuine (*solida et sincera felicitas*): it is plaster-work, and thinly applied at that (*crusta est et quidem tenuis*). (Sen. *Prov*. 6.4; transl. adapted from Davie/Reinhardt 2007)

It is in this sense, I think, that Seneca speaks of divine punishment. In letter 95 he talks about the gods sometimes punishing people through what we may call 'alleged benefaction.'[39] People wrongly judge the wealth and comfort of

36 See also Epict. *Diss*. 4.5.10: "injustice in itself is a great injury to the unjust man."

37 Cf. Marc. Aur. 9.4: "He that does wrong, does wrong to himself (ἁμαρτάνει). The unjust man (ἀδικῶν) is unjust to himself, for he makes himself bad (κακὸν)." See also 4.26.

38 See e.g., Epict. *Fr*. 13 (Stob. 1.3.50).

39 Sen. *Ep*. 95.50 (trans. Graver/Long): "They [the gods] do not dispense or contain anything bad (*malum*); but they do reprove and restrain some people, impose penalties on them, and sometimes punish them while appearing to do them good (*castigant quosdam et*

bad people to be truly valuable and a gift from the gods; in other words, this is the by now familiar misconception that vice is actually more profitable than virtue. It is not, Seneca says, and this becomes most apparent when things start to go wrong, as they must in our mortal lives:

> Those, however, whom he seems to favour, whom he seems to spare, he is really keeping soft against ills to come. For you are wrong if you suppose that any one is exempt from ill. Even the man who has prospered long will have his share some day; whoever seems to have been released has only been reprieved. (Sen. *Prov*. 4.7)

Confronted with illness, destitution, dishonour etc., such seemingly fortunate people will not be able to cope, as their souls are bad and irrational, and their wealth and fame turn out to be no more than 'thinly applied plasterwork' that cover up their vicious core: it is in this sense they can be said to be punished – their misery directly results from their vicious character.

To be clear: I do not think that Seneca believes the gods to actually intervene by handing out wealth and fame as poisoned chalices to vicious people. Rather, he makes the same point as Epictetus in the passages quoted above: given the Stoic value-system, vice implies misery for the vicious person, which is why Stoics like Epictetus or Seneca can characterize this as a divine law or deed.[40]

If all this is correct, it seems to be a nice Stoic solution to the problem posed by their critics, viz. that bad people can do whatever they like with impunity, and thus, that there is something seriously wrong with the providentialist world view of the Stoics. The solution is that because vice is its own punishment, bad people do *not* get away with what they do.[41] Even better, only they themselves suffer from their own viciousness (because their soul is in a bad way), while their so-called victims are not really harmed at all.[42]

There is more, however, since there is some evidence that several Stoics also recognized what appears to be a more traditional form of divine punish-

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coercent et inrogant poenas et aliquando specie boni puniunt)." Seneca may actually be distinguishing different kinds of punishment here; see n. 61 below.

40 Sen. *Ep*. 110.2 makes the same point.

41 On this point, then, the Stoics are in full agreement with Plato's claim in the *Republic*: injustice (vice) is inherently worse than justice (virtue), since the souls of the vicious are in a wretched state.

42 See Marc. Aur. 8.55: "Taken generically, wickedness does no harm to the universe, and the particular wickedness does no harm to others. It is harmful to the one individual alone, and he has been given the option of being quit of it the first moment he pleases." See also Sen. *Ben*. 7.7.3–4 and *Ira* 2.30.2.

ment, viz. God 'intervening' in the cosmos in order to punish vicious people. According to Plutarch, e.g., Chrysippus claimed that god might send plagues or famine as punishment for the wicked. I give two relevant passages in full, as they contain much of interest:

> T1 Yet, having thus disparaged Plato's words, in other places again he [Chrysippus] praises and frequently quotes these lines of Euripides:
>
> *In fact there are, though one deride the words,*
> *Zeus and the gods, who mark our mortal woes*;
>
> and similarly, in the first book concerning Justice he quotes these verses of Hesiod's,
>
> *Zeus from the heavens inflicted a grievous calamity on them,*
> *Plague and famine at once; and the populace utterly perished,*
>
> and then says that the gods do these things in order that from the chastisement of the wicked the rest of mankind may take warning and be less inclined to attempt any similar misdeed.[43]

> T2 Nevertheless, he [Chrysippus] says that god chastises vice and does many things with a view to chastisement of the wicked. For instance, in the second book on the Gods he says that inconvenient things (δύσχρηστα) do sometimes happen to the virtuous not as they do to the base for their chastisement but in the course of other arrangements (κατ' ἄλλην οἰκονομίαν), as happens in cities; and again he puts it in these words: "First, evils are to be understood after the fashion of what has been said before; and then it must be understood that these things are dispensed according to the reason of Zeus either with a view to chastisement or in the course of other arrangements the nature of which is relative to the universe as a whole.[44]

Plutarch, of course, is often highly polemical in reporting Chrysippus' position, but these passages do suggest that Chrysippus indeed held that God could, and sometimes would, inflict punishment on vicious people; the important

43 Plut. *St. Rep.* 1040B–C (transl. Cherniss 1976).
44 Plut. *St. Rep.* 1050D–E (transl. Cherniss 1976).

point being that such punishment, apparently, is something different from the self-inflicted punishment we saw earlier. In other words, it is not just another instance of the general 'law' (in Epictetus' words) that whoever is vicious suffers exactly because of that, but seems to be punishment more directly aimed at the wicked by God himself.

Further evidence on this kind of divine punishment is scarce, but Stobaeus has preserved an excerpt from Hierocles (a Stoic from the second-century CE) that says something very similar. I give the relevant passage in full:

> T3 But in fact one must not overlook this either: that even if the gods are not responsible for evils (κακῶν), they nevertheless inflict some things of this kind on some people and wrap those who deserve them in both bodily and external defects, not because they practice malevolence or because they spitefully believe that a human being should suffer but rather as a form of chastisement (ἐν τρόπῳ κολάσεως). For just as famines and droughts and also floods and earthquakes and every such thing mostly occur because of other, physical causes (δι᾽αἰτίας ἑτέρας τινὰς φυσικωτέρας), but sometimes are also caused by the gods (ἔστι δ᾽ὅτε καὶ ὑπὸ θεῶν), when it is time for the faults of many people to be chastised publicly and collectively, in the same way the gods make use of (χρῶνται) bodily and external defects against a single person too, for his chastisement, to be sure, but also for his conversion (ἐπιστροφή) and a better choice (προαίρεσις) than his other [choices].[45]

At first sight, this god-inflicted punishment may seem out of place in Stoic theory, for at least three different reasons. (1) The Stoics held that God does no harm, and whereas the vicious person is responsible for his or her self-inflicted punishment (as described above), God surely is actively involved here in causing all kinds of suffering. (2) The Stoic deterministic world view (i.e., theory of fate) does not seem to leave much, if any, room for the idea of God actively intervening in human affairs and inflicting impromptu punishment on criminals and vicious people. (3) The inevitability that innocent people will be collaterally affected by some of these punishments seems hard to reconcile with the Stoic idea of divine providence.

In what follows, however, I will try to show how (at least some of) the Stoics may have conceptualized this god-inflicted punishment in order to accommodate it within their system; 'may,' because the extant evidence is scarce and

45 Hierocl. *ap*. *Stob*. 1.3.54, from *How should one behave toward the gods?* (transl. Konstan/Ramelli 2009).

sometimes rather indirect, and often allows no more than tentative conclusions. Even so, I submit the following interpretation renders the Stoic theory of divine punishment coherent in itself and congruous with Stoic theory in general, and takes the three considerations above into account.[46]

To start with (1): The Stoics do indeed claim that God does no harm, but within the Stoic value system that means that God does not cause *moral* evil (i.e., vice), which is the only real evil or harm. As we have already seen, this is something we are responsible for, not God: he does not make us vicious, we do that ourselves. The god-inflicted punishment, in line with this Stoic value system, seems to be restricted to the sphere of indifferent things, such as pain and death caused by earthquakes, disease, famine, bodily harm and disfigurement. In other words, punishing vicious people by inflicting pain, hardship or even death on them is not a problem *per se*, as long as this punishment is not meted out because of something vicious in God (e.g., criminal neglect or spitefulness); and as one would expect, the Stoics emphasize that such punishment actually is not an argument *against*, but *for* God's providence and beneficence.

The primary goal or function of this punishment, viz., does not seem to be retribution, but rather reformation or deterrence or both.[47] The first passage in Plutarch (T1) says that, according to Chrysippus, the purpose of having bad people perish through famine or plague is to warn other people off vice. Similarly, when Hierocles (T3) says that the gods sometimes chastise large groups of people 'publicly,' we may surmise that this public display is meant to deter other people from becoming vicious as well. Now clearly, dying in a flood or famine or earthquake cannot be meant to reform the bad people (since they are dead), but other people might benefit from their deaths, by being motivated to change their lives for the better. Hierocles also says that God may punish an individual in order to convert or reform him (i.e., goad him towards a more virtuous life),[48] but also "for his chastisement"; since he has just distinguished chastisement (κόλασις) from malevolence and the wish to see human beings suffer, I suggest that 'chastisement' refers to the deterrent effect of punishment on others who witness its infliction. So, I think that the Stoics were careful to characterize this punishment as part of divine providence: even

46 See Merz and Tieleman (2008) 115–116 for a brief, but clear, discussion of certain aspects of this topic.

47 Hierocles is explicit about this: the gods punish the wicked, "not because they practice malevolence, or because they spitefully believe that a human being should suffer but rather as a form of chastisement." (As cited above in T3.)

48 See also Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 35, where (Stoic) punishment is described as 'improvement' or 'correction' (ἐπανόρθωσις).

when God punishes us, he is beneficent and benevolent.[49] His punishment always brings about a better cosmos, since either a bad person will change his ways, and/or (when he and other bad people perish through the punitive measures) *other* people will change their ways for the better. In other words, such punishment does not threaten the Stoic claim that everything that God does is beneficial.[50]

(2) Even though this God-inflicted punishment is specifically aimed at the wicked, it cannot be an *ad hoc*, 'on the spot' divine intervention that is somehow not a part of fate, which would be impossible.[51] In other words, it *has* to be part of fate in order to make sense within Stoic metaphysics, and Hierocles at least hints at this, when he says that "changelessness and firmness too was one of the virtues, and it is reasonable that this provides among the gods too the stability and immovability of what they have once decided [about chastisement (κόλασις)]."[52] There is nothing in the evidence that suggests otherwise, and one would have expected Plutarch, e.g., to have picked up on such an inconsistency if he could have. Furthermore, there is corroborating evidence: according to Alexander of Aphrodisias, e.g., the Stoics explicitly claimed punishment to be part of fate,[53] and in Diogenes Laertius we find the following famous passage: "We are told that he was once chastising a slave for stealing, and when the latter pleaded that it was his fate to steal, 'Yes, and to be beaten too,' said Zeno."[54] So, even though this kind of punishment is traditionally seen

49 The Stoic philosopher Cornutus (first-century CE) affirms this in his characterization of the Erinnyes in *Greek Theology* 10 (transl. Boys-Stones 2018): "These goddesses are holy and kindly; for nature's benevolence toward men has also provided for the punishment of wickedness."

50 As seen above (see sect. 3 above) Plato made the same point. Also, In *Quast. Rom.* 276f–277a, Plutarch claims that the Stoics held "that evil spirits stalk about whom the gods use as executioners and avengers upon unholy and unjust men." Algra (2009) 384, suggests that this is probably a Plutarchean construct, and the evidence I have just discussed about god-inflicted punishment being beneficial corroborates this.

51 See e.g., Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.125–126. Seneca (*Prov.* 5.8, transl. Davie/Reinhardt 2007) explicitly claims God does not deviate from fate: "[T]he great creator and ruler of the universe himself wrote fate's decrees, it is true, but he follows them; he obeys forever, but made his decrees only once (*semper paret, semel iussit*)."

52 Hierocles *ap.* Stob. 1.3.54, from *How should one behave toward the gods?* (transl. Konstan/Ramelli 2009).

53 Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 35 and 37 reports on the Stoic defense of the compatibility of fate with the meaningful use of such terms as wrong and right, praise and blame, reward and punishment (and correction).

54 D.L. 7.23. Further on (7.123, transl. Hicks 1972) Diogenes also reports that Stoic sages "are not pitiful and make no allowance for anyone; they never relax the penalties fixed by the

as inflicted by an interventionist god, the Stoics would have been able to characterize it as part of fate all the same.

(3) When we come to the apparent problem of collateral damage, it is important to realize that it is not just pertinent to this god-inflicted punishment. We know that Stoic theodicy claims that in the interest of the cosmos as a whole, the occurrence of natural disasters, diseases, hardship, pain and death is unavoidable. God does not *want* to kill or hurt people that suffer from such events, but human suffering (with regard to indifferent things like our body and material possessions) is sometimes an unavoidable side effect of God's providential work, in the same sense that the fragility of the human skull is a non-intended side-effect of its excellent functionality.[55] In the texts cited above (T2 and T3), Plutarch and Hierocles mention this point as well, and argue that such non-intended and non-deserved suffering can result from God inflicting punishment on those who *do* deserve it, just as it can result from what needs to happen for the welfare of the cosmos as a whole.[56]

Now that this has been clarified, the question does arise in what sense exactly earthquakes, plagues and the like, as well as individual sufferings, are a part of fate, i.e., whether they always serve *one* purpose or can occasionally serve a *dual* purpose. To phrase it differently: are disasters and hardships that happen for punitive purposes always numerically different disasters and hardships from the ones that serve a cosmological purpose, or are they (or can they be) the same? If they are different, some disasters happen for cosmological purposes, others for moral purposes; and if they can be the same, then *all* disasters and hardships happen for cosmological purposes, and some of those also serve a moral purpose – viz. when, as Hierocles puts it "it is time for the faults of many people to be chastised publicly and collectively." In that way, God could kill two birds with one stone, so to speak: the cosmos as a whole benefits from the relevant physical changes of the cosmos, and human beings benefit from the moral goading they get, either by suffering from the disasters themselves or by seeing others suffer from them. From the perspective of Stoic

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laws, since indulgence and pity and even equitable consideration are marks of a weak mind, which affects kindness in place of chastising. Nor do they deem punishments too severe." See Rist (1969) 83 on the Stoic position on punishments in general: "[…] the Old Stoics seem to have thought that they [punishments] have two functions, as retribution and as a warning to other people."

55 This example as used by Chrysippus (who borrowed it from Plato *Ti.* 75a–c) is found in Aulus Gellius *Noct. Att.* 7.1.10–11 (*SVF* 2.1170). See also Plut. *St. Rep.* 1051C, and Marc. Aur. 2.3, 6.36, 6.44 and especially 8.50.

56 Which is what I take the words "other arrangements the nature of which is relative to the universe as a whole" in T2 to refer to.

sages, all of this makes perfect sense and does not tell against God's providence: even if they should die from a disaster that improves the cosmos itself and maybe even their fellow human beings, they will happily approve of that.

Now, I think that the Chrysippean text referred to by Plutarch in T2 can be read in this way, and the Hieroclean text as well, although one could have wished the evidence to have been a bit more explicit.[57] There is another parallel, however, in Philo of Alexandria's *On Providence* (first-century CE). He was not a Stoic, of course, but his ideas on theodicy seem to be taken largely from Stoic stock.[58] The following passage is from a fragment of his *On Providence* preserved in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* (from around 300 CE):

> 41. And why should we wonder that God uses tyrants to sweep away the wickedness which has spread through cities and countries and nations? For often instead of employing other ministers He effects this by Himself by bringing famine or pestilence and earthquake, and all the other divine visitations whereby great bodies of people perish in huge numbers every day and a large part of the world is desolated for His purpose of promoting virtue. [...] 53. Earthquakes, pestilence, thunderbolts and the like though said to be visitations from God are not really such. For nothing evil at all is caused by God, and these things are generated by changes in the elements. They are not primary works of nature but a sequel of her essential works, attendant circumstances to the primary. (Phil. *Provid.* 41 and 53; ap. Eus. *PE* 8.14)[59]

Clearly 53 seems to contradict 41, in denying what 41 claims, viz. that God *does* inflict famine and pestilence upon sinners. Philo may be inconsistent here, of course, but it would be a massive slip-up, considering that the passages are rather close together. A more plausible interpretation is offered by Colson in his notes to the Loeb-translation, when he says that "though earthquakes, pestilences etc., are in themselves incidental consequences they may still be employed by God as a means of chastisement."[60] I agree, and argue that this may well have been the view of Hierocles and Chrysippus: many natural disasters or other 'inconveniences' (δύσχρηστα) have to happen anyway, for the good of the cosmos, and now and then God, never letting an opportunity go to waste, uses these inconveniences for punitive purposes also.

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57 Of course, I acknowledge that the texts *can* also be read as indicating a numerical distinction between 'cosmic' happenings and punitive ones.

58 See e.g., Runia (2017) and Frick (1999) 189ff.

59 Transl. Colson (1941).

60 Colson (1941) 546.

This interpretation of divine justice, both the self-inflicted and the god-inflicted punishment, would allow the Stoics to claim that God's providence is not threatened by the apparent prospering of vicious people. Scarce though the evidence may be, it seems as if the Stoics (or at least some of them) argued that God could and sometimes would punish the wicked by inflicting disasters or hardships on them.[61] Of course, they knew very well this this did not happen always (as shown by the use of 'sometimes' by both Chrysippus and Hierocles in T2 resp. T3), but they could hold that this was not necessary either. The self-inflicted punishment already guarantees that all vicious people are miserable, while the god-inflicted punishment shows that Gods wisdom and providence does not let go any opportunity go to waste to benefit the cosmos and human beings at the same time.

5 Concluding Remarks

Finally, one might ask *why* we find these two kinds of divine punishment in Stoicism, and I have two answers to that. First, this can be explained when we take into account that Stoic theology defies simple classification: it is multi-faceted in the sense that the Stoic god has different aspects. So, their theology is *pantheistic* or even a form of *religious naturalism* when they characterize God as the immanent and formative principle of the cosmos, but *theistic* when they call him Zeus and a caring father who is beneficent and provident towards mankind and watches over us. The 'wickedness is its own punishment'-variant fits the pantheistic view, the 'God chastises bad people' the theistic one.[62]

So, the first answer is that Stoic theology itself is flexible enough to allow these two kinds of punishment. The second has to do with why, even when their theology allows this, the Stoics would *want* to have these two kinds. The Stoics' own theistic perspective on God as the caring and beneficent father of all is important here. The Stoic Zeus, even more than the Zeus of traditional religion, could not be expected to spare the rod and spoil his children, and through his punishments, he actually shows his care for the cosmos, as "the system constituted of gods and human beings."[63] Moreover, I suggest that many Stoics felt that while 'wickedness as its own punishment' is fine as a philosophical solution to the problem of the apparent flourishing of unjust

61 Sen. *Ep*. 95.50 (see n. 39 above) may well be a reference to both kinds of punishment: *castigant quosdam et coercent et inrogant poenas* to the God-inflicted kind and *aliquando specie boni puniunt* to the self-inflicted kind.

62 See Chrysippus' citation of Euripides' and Hesiod's lines about the punishing Zeus in T1.

63 Diog. Laert. 7.138.

people, it might not be potent enough to satisfy the *communis opinio* that the wicked should also suffer in a more (pleasingly) physical and conspicuous way. This was not a new problem, as Plato was confronted with it as well: he tried to convince us that the life of the unjust person is *inherently* worse than that of the just person, but for those who are not convinced by this argument about the inherent disadvantage of injustice, he also threatened with fire and brimstone in the afterlife. The Stoics, of course, could not accommodate such post-mortem punishment in their (meta)physics, but I have argued that they *did* try and salvage a form of divine punishment as it was known from traditional religion in their own way.[64]

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CHAPTER 13

Divine Unions in Byzantine Christianity: The Penetration of Fire into Iron as a Methaphor of *Theôsis*

Dmitry Biriukov

1 The Stoic Doctrine on Mixture and the Example of the Penetration of Fire into Iron in the Christian Literature: Typology[1]

The example of iron and fire as an illustration of the interpenetration of bodies has its origins in a Stoic doctrine.[2] The Stoics used this example, among others, in order to substantiate their teaching about the *total blending* of bodies (as distinguished from from *conflation* and *composition*). According to the Stoics, the blending (μίξις, κρᾶσις) of bodies takes place when a body receives certain qualities of another, while remaining, nevertheless, itself, or when both mixed bodies acquire the qualities of each other, while preserving their own natures. By contrast, in the case of *conflation* (σύγχυσις), bodies lose their identity as they establish a new junction, and in *composition* (παράθεσις), they merely touch each other externally. The blending with preservation of the mixed bodies' natures was understood by the Stoics as *total blending* (κρᾶσις δι' ὅλων),[3] that is such that one body penetrates into another completely and totally. As the tradition testified by Stobaeus asserts, for the mixture the Stoics distinguished κρᾶσις as applied to liquids and μίξις for non-liquids (it was the μίξις type of mixture that Stoics demonstrated through the example of iron and fire).[4]

The principle of total blending was exemplified by the Stoics through the examples of the mixture of wine and water, the penetration of soul into body,[5]

1 The chapters "Gregory Palamas" and "Conclusion" of this paper were written at the support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, project 19-011-00952, "The doctrine of Gregory Palamas as a philosophical system: a historical and philosophical analysis."

2 Alex. Aphr. *De Mixt*. 4. 218.1–3; 12. 227.11–228.4; Bruns (1892).

3 As a technical term, the notion of *total blending* has been mostly in use.

4 Jo. Stob. 1.17. 374–377; Meineke (1869) 102.

5 *Ibid*. The background of this example is a prerequisite specific for the Stoic doctrine that everything existing is corporeal. On fire in the theurgic union, *Chaldaean Oracles* and magic see Chpt. 11, sect. 4.

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piercing of the air by light,[6] and iron made incandescent by fire. In the last case, a piece of iron receives the properties of fire (burning), while preserving its nature.

The Stoic teaching on blending, whereby the mixed bodies retain their identity, was appropriated and actively applied by Christian authors.

Generally, the examples of total blending of physical bodies put forward by the Stoics have a natural ability to illustrate two possible cases. These may called the symmetrical and asymmetrical imparting of properties. The example of mixing wine with water serves as an illustration for the case of the symmetrical imparting of properties: for here each of two existing things acquire the properties of the other – wine takes the properties of water and water take those of wine. For such examples as the penetration of fire into iron and the piercing of the air by light, these are the cases where one item accepts the properties of the another, whereas the latter does not accept the properties of the former (iron takes the properties of fire and air takes those of light, but not vice versa).

Regarding the penetration of fire into iron, we can identify two closely related, though not identical, interpretative lines in Byzantine theology, with their respective grounding in Stoic natural philosophy. One is the need to point to something that combines within itself simultaneously two and one realities (which is a philosophical prerequisite of the Chalcedonian Christology). The other is the case, when something receives into itself the properties of the other ("of a better nature"). In this latter case, it is as a rule the asymmetrical relationship that is illustrated through the example of penetration of fire into iron: when the properties of one item are received by the other but the former does not receive the properties of the latter, and even, in particular, when the properties of the item receiving the properties of another cease to manifest themselves and disappear under the received properties. The latter happens, as we shall see, when the example of burning iron (and air pierced by light) served to illustrate the penetration of the uncreated into the created. These two interpretative lines often converged in one and the same case, as it used to be in the Christological literature.[7]

Generally, in the Byzantine theological literature the example of fire and iron has been applied within a narrative of two diverse natures interacting with each other so that they form a unity in one way or another (in regard to hypostasis in the case of Christ; in regard to powers, properties or energies in other cases). Depending on their objectives some writers used the example

6 E.g., Alex. Aphr. *De Mixt*. 4. 218.9–10; Bruns (1892).

7 See Biriukov (2019).

to emphasize the difference of the interacting natures and thus focused on its *distinctive potential*, whereas others conversely employed it for its *uniting potential* as we shall see below.

If we try to typologize the goals for which the example of fire and iron was used in the Eastern Christian theology, the following typology can be created: first, in order to represent the conjunction of the two natures of Christ in one hypostasis and to clarify the specificity of the communication of these natures; second, in order to illustrate *theôsis*, when the divine properties appear in the deified human being; third, in order to depict the mode of unification with God for the angelic powers; and, fourth, following the ancient philosophical tradition, in order to depict the penetration of a human soul into a body.

The following casts light on some of these lines, first of all, the *theôsis*' line, by considering different Early Christian and Byzantine theologians.

2 The Theme of Penetration of Fire into Iron in the Teaching on *Theôsis*

2.1 *Origen*

The first author to use the example of iron penetrated by fire was Origen who illustrated with it the conjunction of the Logos with Christ's soul. According to Origen, just like the burning iron accepts the qualities inherent in the nature of fire: light and heat – the same way the soul of Christ is present in God: everything it thinks, feels and performs, is God. This interpretation is featured in the second book of the treatise *On the First Principles*:

> *ferri metallum capax est et frigoris et caloris; si ergo massa aliqua ferri semper in igne sit posita, omnibus suis poris omnibusque uenis ignem recipiens et tota ignis effecta, si neque ignis ab ea cesset aliquando neque ipsa ab igne separetur: numquidnam dicemus hanc, quae natura quidem ferri massa est, in igne positam et indesinenter ardentem posse frigus aliquando recipere? Quin immo* (*quod uerius est*) *magis earn, sicut in fornacibus saepe fieri oculis deprehendimus, totam ignem effectam dicimus, quia nec aliud in ea nisi ignis cernitur; sed et si qui contingere atque adtrectare temtauerit, non ferri, sed ignis uim sentiet. Hoc ergo modo etiam ilia anima, quae quasi ferrum in igne sic semper in uerbo, semper in sapientia, semper in deo posita est, omne quod agit, quod sentit, quod intellegit, deus est.*
>
> The metal iron is capable of cold and heat. If, then, a mass of iron be kept constantly in the fire, receiving the heat through all its pores and

> veins, and the fire being continuous and the iron never removed from it, it become wholly converted into the latter; could we at all say of this, which is by nature a mass of iron, that when placed in the fire, and incessantly burning, it was at any time capable of admitting cold? On the contrary, because it is more consistent with truth, do we not rather say, what we often see happening in furnaces, that it has become wholly fire, seeing nothing but fire is visible in it? And if anyone was to attempt to touch or handle it, he would experience the action not of iron, but of fire. In this way, then, that soul which, like an iron in the fire, has been perpetually placed in the Word, and perpetually in the Wisdom, and perpetually in God, is God in all that it does, feels, and understands. (Orig. *De Princ*. 2.6.6.181–195; p. 321, ed. Crouzel and Simonetti 1978)[8]

With the example of the penetration of fire into iron, Origen demonstrates, first, that the soul of Christ is entirely penetrated by divine properties and accepts them; second, that as the heated iron becomes a source of heat and light, the soul of Christ is a source of divine heat for people; and third, giving an example where the iron is always in fire, Origen postulates the immutability of unity of Christ's soul with God.[9] Attention should be paid to Origen's assertion that the iron is totally penetrated by fire: the combination of the example provided by the Stoics with the notion of totality allows him to affirm that here we are observing the concept of total blending in its technical meaning.

Origen's application of the example to the union of Christ's soul with God became – as illustrating the penetration of the uncreated into the created –

8 Transl. Roberts, Donaldson and Coxe (2007) IV. 283.

9 Harry Wolfson erroneously binds this conception with the influence of Aristotelianism. He states that in the above cited fragment from Origen, there is a reflection of Alexander of Aphrodisias' position (Wolfson (1976) 384 refers to Alex. Aphr. De Mixt. 222.36–223.6; Bruns (1892)), compliant to whom the iron relates to the fire as the matter to the form; see Wolfson (1976) 395. István Perczel, who does not share the view of Wolfson, justly allocates this Origen's passage to the tradition of Stoic doctrine on mixture of bodies with preservation of identity of their natures; see Perczel (2000) 60–62, n. 33 and 38. It is worthy to note that against Wolfson's assertions at least the fact testifies that, according to Alexander, the material as the matter shaped by fire burns down (it does not relate to the primary matter, but relates to any concrete material under the fire and feeding it, in particular, to the iron), see: *De Mixt*. 223.1–6, 227.17–25; Bruns (1892). In the same time, the Stoic conception of mixture supposes the preservation of identity of both natures, and that is quite what is essential for Origen – both as the illustrative material he employed (the iron is constantly incandesced in his example without destruction and not burning down) and as for what he wanted to express with the metaphor of fire and iron regarding the soul of Christ.

paradigmatic and influenced the shaping of two of the aforementioned interpretations of the Stoic doctrine of mixture in Byzantine literature: when the image of burning iron was employed within the Christological context, and when it was taken for a description of *theôsis* of a human being.

Before turning to sources about the latter type of interpretation, I will comment briefly on the reaction of the Cappadocians to Origen's example.

2.2 *The Cappadocians*

While advocating the Nicaean doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and clashing with Arianism/Anomoeanism in the person of Eunomius, the Cappadocian theologians rejected the comparison of Christ's communion with God and the penetration of fire into iron made by Origen. Gregory of Nyssa argued that the nature of iron is essentially different from that of fire, because iron in its natural state is cold, and that the example cannot therefore be used to illustrate the conjunction of Christ-Logos and God the Father.[10]

However, Origen's example was picked up and used by the Cappadocians to illustrate the penetration of the uncreated into the created, and was probably applied by them in the Christological context,[11] and for the topic of the imparting of divine properties to the angelic powers. It could be asserted that Basil of Caesarea applied the paradigm that Origen had used to describe the relation of Christ's soul with the deity to that of the deity and the angels.

> Ἀρχαὶ μὲν γὰρ, καὶ ἐξουσίαι, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ τοιαύτη κτίσις, ἐκ προσοχῆς καὶ ἐπιμελείας τὸν ἁγιασμὸν ἔχουσαι, οὐκ ἂν εἰκότως φύσει ἅγιαι εἶναι λέγοιντο. Ἐπορεγόμεναι γὰρ τοῦ καλοῦ, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἀγάπης, καὶ τοῦ μέτρου τῆς ἁγιωσύνης μεταλαμβάνουσι. Καὶ ὥσπερ ὁ σίδηρος, ἐν μέσῳ τῷ πυρὶ κείμενος, τὸ μὲν σίδηρος εἶναι οὐκ ἀποβέβληκε, τῇ δὲ σφοδροτάτῃ πρὸς τὸ πῦρ ὁμιλίᾳ ἐκπυρακτωθεὶς, καὶ πᾶσαν εἰς ἑαυτὸν τὴν τοῦ πυρὸς φύσιν ὑποδεξάμενος, καὶ χρώματι καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ πρὸς τὸ πῦρ μεταβέβηκεν· οὕτω καὶ αἱ ἅγιαι δυνάμεις ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὸ φύσει ἅγιον κοινωνίας δι' ὅλης τῆς ἑαυτῶν ὑποστάσεως κεχωρηκότα ἤδη καὶ συμπεφυσιωμένον τὸν ἁγιασμὸν ἔχουσι. Διαφορὰ δὲ αὐταῖς πρὸς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον αὕτη, ὅτι τῷ μὲν φύσις ἡ ἁγιωσύνη, ταῖς δὲ ἐκ μετουσίας ὑπάρχει τὸ ἁγιάζεσθαι. Οἷς δὲ ἐπισκευαστὸν καὶ ἑτέρωθεν ἐπιδεδομένον ὑπάρχει τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τῆς μεταπτωτῆς εἰσι φύσεως. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν

10 Greg. Nys. *C. Eun.* 1.1.284; p. 110.9–14 Jaeger (1960). Brief discussion on the issue: Barnes (1998) 76–77, n. 75.

11 Bas. Caesar. *In s. Chr. Gen.*, PG 31, col. 1457–1461 (though the authenticity of this homily is not completely confirmed).

> ἐξέπεσεν ὁ Ἑωσφόρος ὁ πρωῒ ἀνατέλλων, ⟨…⟩ εἰ φύσει ὑπῆρχε τοῦ χείρονος ἀνεπίδεκτος. ⟨…⟩ Ἡ μὲν γὰρ κτίσις πέφυκεν ἅθλον προκοπῆς καὶ τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν εὐαρεστήσεως τὸν ἁγιασμὸν ἔχουσα, φύσει δὲ χρωμένη αὐτεξουσίῳ, καὶ μεταῤῥέπειν ἐφ' ἑκάτερα δυναμένη, πρὸς ἐκλογὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ χείρονος· τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον πηγὴ ἁγιασμοῦ.
>
> ⟨…⟩ It would make no sense to say that the principalities and powers and all such creatures, which have holiness from diligence and attention, are holy by nature. After all, yearning for the good, they receive a measure of holiness proportionate to their love for God. Furthermore, when iron is placed in the middle of fire, while it does not cease to be iron, it is nonetheless inflamed by the intense contact with the fire and admits the entire nature of fire into itself. And so, in both outward appearance and activity the iron is transformed into fire. Likewise, the holy powers, from their communion with that which is holy by nature, possess a holiness that pervades their whole subsistence, and they become connatural with that which is holy by nature. The holy powers and Holy Spirit differ in this regard: for the latter, holiness is nature, whereas for the former, being made holy comes from participation. Those for whom the good is adventitious and introduced from another possess a nature that can change. Indeed, Lucifer who rises at dawn would neither have fallen ⟨…⟩ if by nature he was not capable of admitting that which is worse. ⟨…⟩ It is the nature of creation to have holiness as the prize for its progress and for becoming well-pleasing to God. By its nature it employs self-determination and is capable of moving itself toward either direction by choosing the good or the bad. But the Holy Spirit is the source of holiness. (Bas. Caesar. *C. Eun.* III. 2.29–53; Sesboüé, Durand and Doutreleau (1983) 152–154; *PG* 29b, col. 660)[12]

In the context of the controversy with the Anomoeans who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit and affirmed that his nature is similar to the nature of angels, Basil of Caesarea differentiates the angelic powers, which have no sanctity by their nature, and the Holy Spirit, the source and bearer of sanctity by his nature. Just as fire penetrates into iron, the Holy Spirit sanctifies the angelic powers and *totally penetrates* into their nature, so that the angels accept by participation the sanctity that is natural to the Holy Spirit. Here, too, there are

12 Transl. DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (2011) 188. Cf. *Idem*, *De Spir.* 26.63; Pruche (1968) 472–474; *PG* 32, col. 184B.

references to the Stoic concept of κρᾶσις δι᾽ ὅλων in the technical sense. Basil's discourse suggests that having accepted the sanctity of the Spirit through the good intentionality of will, the angelic powers become similar to the Spirit by their properties – like burning iron accepts the properties and energies of fire. Due to our knowledge of etiology, we can discern a difference between the nature of the Spirit and that of the angelic powers. Angelic powers, being changeable and autocratic by nature, had the opportunity to choose good or evil, and they chose the good and by implication also holiness. By contrast, the Spirit is good and holy by nature, in eternity, so that we cannot speak of him as one who chose good and holiness. We see here that Basil, wishing to distinguish precisely the orders of being of angels and of the Holy Spirit, brings out the distinctive potential of the example.

2.3 *Cyril of Alexandria*

Cyril of Alexandria relied on this very passage from Basil, when he polemicised against the Arians (especially in: *Thesaurus* 34, *PG* 75, col. 593A–B). Cyril introduces the topic of iron and fire to distinguish the created and uncreated natures. To be able to do this, Cyril, quite similarly to Basil, operates with the categories of *by nature – by participation*, while linking these categories to the example of fire penetrating into iron: the latter has the properties by participation, which fire possesses it by its nature. According to Cyril, the Son and the Spirit are holy and are the Deity by nature; while "we" are joined to God through participation like iron, which is penetrated by fire and acquires its properties.[13]

In this context, Cyril starts using technical and philosophical language. He says in his *Thesaurus* that the properties come out indivisibly from substances and thus are transferred to other substances gaining unity by participation with the first substances in regard of these properties. This is the way the heat comes out of fire, sweetness from honey, freshness from water.[14] Cyril deals with this topic in his *Commentary on St John's Gospel*, where he gives the example of fire conveying its heat to iron and wood, and also that of grammar and geometry, which are learned by human beings, who then acquire the name of, respectively, grammarian and geometer. While speaking of this, Cyril resorts to the discourse of naming: fire is hot by nature, while burning iron and wood are called hot, once they participate in fire and receive from it the power of heat that is naturally not proper to them; nonetheless, they are not

13 Cyrill. Alex. *Thesaur*. 12: *PG* 75, col. 200A.

14 Cyrill. Alex. *Theasur*. 34: *PG* 75, col. 593B.

called fire. In a similar way, a grammarian and a geometer are named by the science, which they have learned, respectively, grammar ad geometry; nonetheless, they are neither grammar, nor geometry.

> οἷον θερμὸν μὲν τῇ φύσει τὸ πῦρ, θερμὰ δὲ καὶ ἕτερα, τῆς ἐνεργείας μετασχόντα τῆς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, σίδηρος τυχὸν ἢ ξύλον· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπείπερ ἐθερμάνθη, διὰ τοῦτο λέγοιντ' ἂν εἶναι καὶ πῦρ· ἀλλοτρίαν γὰρ καὶ οὐ φυσικὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἔχει. ἥξει δὲ καὶ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς τῶν παραδειγμάτων ὁ λόγος· ἡ γραμματικὴ τυχὸν ἤτοι γεωμετρικὴ, λογικῆς μὲν ἐπιστήμης εἴδη πιστεύεται, ἀλλ' ὅταν τις ἴδρις γένηται γραμματικῆς ἤτοι τῆς ἑτέρας, οὐκ αὐτὸ γραμματικὴ νοηθήσεται τυχὸν, ἤτοι γεωμετρικὴ, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ γενομένης γραμματικῆς, γραμματικὸς ὀνομάζεται.
>
> As fire is hot by nature, and other things too are hot, by partaking of its operation, as iron or wood: but not because they are heated, are they said to be fire: for they have an external and not a physical operation in them. But our argument will proceed by means of illustrations in regard to ourselves too. Grammar for instance, or Geometry, are held to be species of reasoning science, but when any one becomes skilled in grammar or the other, he is not himself conceived of as Grammar or Geometry, but from the Grammar that is in him, he is called a Grammarian. (Cyrill. Alex. *Comm. in Joan.* 4.3.57)[15]

Evidently, this discourse of naming, advanced by Cyril of Alexandria, responds to the elementary procedure of predicating, where one thing is predicated with a property specific for another.[16]

Therefore, the example of burning iron as an illustration of the specificity of the penetration of the uncreated into the created is developed in the following way by Cyril of Alexandria: first, instead of angels as created beings, of which Basil has spoken, Cyril is speaking of "us," i.e., human beings; second, Cyril uses a scholasticized language by introducing the notions of *nature* (*substance*), *properties* and *naming*.

15 Pursey (1872) 541; tranls. Pusey (1874) 427.

16 Within the framework of Aristotelian conceptual network, a property/predicate, on which Cyril here argues, correlates with a property/natural faculty, whereof Aristotle speaks in *Cat.* 9a14–24. Such a property/natural faculty is distinct from substance, but also is not an accidental and transient property. It naturally belongs to the item it proceeds from (like heat belongs to fire).

2.4 *Ps.-Macarius*

The topic of fire and iron can be also found in the anthropological and ascetical literature of that period: in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, of the author of the Macarian corpus, of Abba Isaiah[17] etc. The author of the Macarian corpus reveals acquaintance with the ancient natural philosophical concepts of mixture: he speaks of the confusion of evil with a human not in the mode of mixture of wine with water (τὴν μῖξιν τοῦ οἴνου καὶ τοῦ ὕδατος), but in that of wheat and tares, growing on the same field, or of the presence of a robber and a house owner in one habitation.[18] Ps.-Macarius contraposes here a mixture of physical bodies – which is understood in the sense of the Stoic total blending (testified by the classic Stoic example of mixture of wine and water, as well as the context, wherein the theologian mentions the example) – to an external composition of elements. According to the author, the evil is presented in a human in an external way, not mingling with the human essence entirely.

For the penetration of fire into iron,[19] Ps.-Macarius not only addresses it from an eschatological perspective, but also mentions it in the description of *theôsis*. In this context, he affirms that a human being united with God modifies their proper properties with the divine ones, the same way as the iron loses its natural rigidness and becomes soft under the heat of fire:

> ὥσπερ γὰρ σίδηρος ἢ μόλιβδος ἢ χρυσὸς ἢ ἄργυρος ἐπὶ πῦρ βληθέντα λύεται ἐκ τῆς φύσεως τῆς σκληρᾶς, εἰς ἀπαλότητα μεταβαλλόμενα, καὶ ἐφ' ὅσον ἐν τῷ πυρὶ τυγχάνει, λύεται καὶ ἠλλοίωται τῆς φυσικῆς σκληρότητος διὰ τὴν τοῦ πυρὸς θερμὴν δύναμιν, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἡ ψυχὴ ἀρνησαμένη τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὸν κύριον μόνον ποθήσασα.
>
> Just as iron or lead or gold or silver, if thrown into fire, will melt and be transformed from its natural hardness to a soft substance, and as long as it remains in the fire becomes all the more a molten liquid, losing its natural hardness because of the powerful heat of the fire, the same is true for the soul that has turned away from the world in its desire for the Lord alone. (*Hom.* 4.14; Dörries, Klostermann and Krüger 1964, 37; transl. Maloney 1992, 55)

17 Marcus Plested draws attention to the likeness of writings of Abba Isaiah and Ps.-Macarius in this as well as in some other aspects, see: Plested (2004) 184–185.

18 *Hom.* 46.2; Danuvio and Desprez (2014) 579.

19 *Hom.* 15.10; Dörries, Klostermann and Krüger (1964) 132.

> ὥσπερ καὶ σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου κερασθὲν τῇ θεότητι θεός ἐστιν· ὥσπερ δὲ σίδηρος βληθεὶς εἰς πῦρ πῦρ ἐστι, καὶ οὐδὲν δύναται αὐτοῦ ἅψασθαι ἢ ἐγγίσαι, ἐπεὶ ἀφανίζεται καὶ ἀναλίσκεται, εἰ μὴ μόνον τὸ πῦρ μετὰ τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ ἄνθρακες πυρὸς μετὰ ἀνθράκων δύνανται εἶναι ἀβλαβεῖς, οὕτω καὶ πᾶσα ψυχὴ διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ πνεύματος καθαρισθεῖσα καὶ πῦρ καὶ πνεῦμα γενομένη δύναται εἶναι μετὰ τοῦ ἀχράντου σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.
>
> Like the body of Christ, being mingled with the deity, is God; like iron cast into fire is a fire, and nobody can touch or approach to it without fearing to be eliminated or extinguished (only fire with fire and heated coal with heated coal may remain unhurt) – the same way any soul purified by the fire of the Spirit and having become itself fire and spirit, can be together with the pure body of Christ. (*Hom.* 52.6; Maloney 1992, 27)

Like Origen, Ps.-Macarius compares the human soul with the burning iron; but certainly, Christology represented in the latter fragment is quite different from that of Origen. The human soul to which Ps.-Macarius applies the example of iron and fire is not the soul of Christ, as it is in Origen, but the soul of the deified man. Ps.-Macarius assimilates the union of the soul with God to the penetration of fire into iron and to the incarnation of Christ, of which he also speaks in terms of mixture. The presence of the issue of incarnation in this fragment allows us to detect here an echo of the *tantum quantum* principle, that is, inasmuch as God became man, man becomes God. This principle is expressed in the above-cited passage in the following way: as in the incarnation (and in the Eucharist), there is a mixture of the Body of Christ with the deity, so that the Body is the very deity, so the purified human soul unites with the Holy Spirit and becomes spirit. With that, the pattern of the penetration of fire into iron stands as the principal exemplification for all these topics, having the Stoic natural philosophy as a background. The author of the Macarian corpus brings out the uniting potential implied in the example: he says that the iron penetrated by fire is fire, just as the Body of Christ mingled with the deity is God, and the human soul purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit is spirit. Therefore, the words of Ps.-Macarius about the conjunction of the created nature with the uncreated one come dangerously close to the suggestion that the created dissolves within the uncreated. In spite of that, to my mind, the example, with its Stoic provenance, points at an understanding, according to which the created is not disappeared but purifies itself and is transfigured when unified with the uncreated, being satiated by its properties.

Here we detect a cardinal difference between Ps.-Macarius' and Cyril of Alexandria's approaches. Both authors utilized the example of iron and fire

to reveal the relation of created and uncreated natures, where the fire corresponds to the uncreated and the iron to the created natures. At this point, differently from Ps.-Macarius, who speaks of iron penetrated by fire as of fire, Cyril, by bringing out the distinctive potential of the example, insisted that the incandescent iron *is not* called fire. This divergence between the approaches of the two theologians could be explained by the fact that Cyril used the example of fire and iron within the framework of dogmatic thought, which deals with the distinction of notions, whereas Ps.-Macarius remained in the ascetic and mystical tradition.

2.5 *Maximus the Confessor*

The example of the penetration of fire into iron taken in the context of the penetration of the uncreated nature into the created one is clearly expressed in the thought of Maximus the Confessor. Maximus writes in the *Ambigua to John*:

> Εἰ δέ κινεῖται ἀναλόγως ἑαυτῷ νοερῶς τό νοερόν, καί νοεῖ πάντως· εἰ δέ νοεῖ, καί ἐρᾷ πάντως τοῦ νοηθέντος· εἰ δ᾽ ἐρᾷ, καί πάσχει πάντως τήν πρός αὐτό ὡς ἐραστόν ἔκστασιν· εἰ δέ πάσχει, δηλονότι καί ἐπείγεται· εἰ δέ ἐπείγεται, καί ἐπιτείνει πάντως τό σφοδρόν τῆς κινήσεως· εἰ δέ ἐπιτείνει σφοδρῶς τήν κίνησιν, οὐχ ἵσταται μέχρις ἄν γένηται ὅλον ἐν τῷ ἐραστῷ ὅλῳ καί ὑφ᾽ ὅλου περιληφθῇ, ἑκουσίως ὅλον κατά προαίρεσιν τήν σωτήριον περιγραφήν δεχόμενον, ἵν᾽ ὅλον ὅλῳ ποιωθῇ τῷ περιγραφόντι, ὡς μηδ᾽ ὅλως λοιπόν βούλεσθαι ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ αὐτό ἐκεῖνο ὅλον γνωρίζεσθαι δύνασθαι τό περιγραφόμενον, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ περιγράφοντος· ὡς ἀήρ δι᾽ ὅλου πεφωτισμένος φωτί, καί πυρί σίδηρος, ὅλος ὅλῳ πεπυρακτωμένος, ἤ εἴ τι ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων ἐστίν.
>
> If an intellective being is moved intellectively; that is, in a manner appropriate to itself, then it will necessarily become a knowing intellect. But if it knows, it surely loves that which it knows; and if it loves, it certainly suffers an ecstasy toward it as an object of love. If it suffers this ecstasy; it obviously urges itself onward, and if it urges itself onward, it surely intensifies and greatly accelerates its motion. And if its motion is intensified in this way; it will not cease until it is wholly present in the whole beloved, and wholly encompassed by it, willingly receiving the whole saving circumscription by its own choice, so that it might be wholly qualified by the whole circumscriber, and, being wholly circumscribed, will no longer be able to wish to be known from its own qualities, but rather from those of the circumscriber, in the same way that air is thoroughly permeated by light, or iron in a forge is completely penetrated by the

> fire, or anything else of this sort. (Max. Conf. *Amb.* VII: *PG* 91, col. 1073C–1076A)[20]

> ὅλοι ὅλῳ κατά τό ἐφικτόν τῆς ἐνούσης αὐτοῖς φυσικῆς δυνάμεως ἑνωθέντες τοσοῦτον ἐνδεχομένως ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐποιώθησαν, ὥστε καί ἀπό μόνου γνωρίζεσθαι, οἷον ἔσοπτρα διειδέστατα, ὅλου τοῦ ἐνορῶντος Θεοῦ Λόγου τό εἶδος ἀπαραλείπτως διά τῶν θείων αὐτοῦ γνωρισμάτων φαινόμενον ἔχοντες, τῷ ἐλλειφθῆναι μηδένα τῶν παλαιῶν χαρακτήρων, οἷς μηνύεσθαι πέφυκε τό ἀνθρώπινον, πάντων εἰξάντων τοῖς ἀμείνοσιν, οἷον ἀήρ ἀφεγγής φωτί δι᾽ ὅλου μετεγκραθείς.

> Having been wholly united with the whole [Word], within the limits of what their own inherent natural potency allows, as much as may be, they were imbued with His own qualities, so that, like the clearest of mirrors, they [the saints] are now known only as reflections of the undiminished form of God the Word, who gazes out from within them, for they possess the fullness of His divine characteristics, yet none of the original attributes that naturally define human beings have been lost, for all things have simply yielded to what is better, like air – which in itself is not luminous – completely mixed with light. (Max. Conf. *Amb.* X: *PG* 91, col. 1137B11–C6)[21]

Maximus suggests that the saints who are entirely penetrated by the entire divinity and suffer an imparting of properties from the divine, accept the divine properties, so that hereafter they are both recognized by them and become conscious of themselves via these properties, while, nevertheless, not being deprived of their own created nature.[22] It should be noticed that here Maximus uses Stoic terminology: he speaks of the *total blending* of air with light, and, similarly to the Stoics,[23] applies the example of air penetrated by light alongside the example of fire and iron.[24]

At the conceptual level, we see here the same consequence as in the thought of the author of the Macarian corpus. Like Ps.-Macarius, Maximus promotes the uniting potential of the example of fire and iron (and that of air and light) and asserts that the deified human being is recognized not by

20 Transl. Constas (2014) 87–88.
21 Transl. Constas (2014) 213 slightly revised.
22 Cf. Sherwood (1955) 151.
23 See Alex. Aphr. *De Mixt.* 4. 217.32–218.11; Bruns (1892).
24 *Ibid.*

human properties, but by the divine properties which he acquires in uniting with the deity.

Elaborating the position of Ps.-Macarius, Maximus takes a step further, which allows him to unfold the uniting potential of the metaphor of burning iron as referring to the penetration of the uncreated nature into the created one, and at the same time to avert the danger of interpreting his thought in the sense that the created would dissolve in the uncreated. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Maximus introduces reflection into his narrative and employs the *cognition*/*recognition* phraseology – that is the point where his discourse essentially differs from the ontologizing language of Ps.-Macarius. Maximus utilizes the image of a mirror (implying that a deified man reflects in himself the divine properties), and says that a saint is cognized and recognized by the properties of the deity present in him like enlightened air and incandescent iron which are recognized by the natures penetrating into them, respectively light and fire. Ps.-Macarius affirms that the human soul when purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit *is* spirit, as the iron penetrated by fire *is* fire.

2.6 *John Damascene*

After Maximus the Confessor, the penetration of fire into iron in the context of the depiction of *theôsis* seemed to retain its connection with the discourse of *cognition* established by Maximus. One can find it in the writings of John Damascene and Symeon the New Theologian.

Damascene addresses this topic in the third *Apologetic Treatise against those Decrying the Holy Images*:

> Πόσα τὰ προσκυνούμενα εὑρίσκομεν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ κατὰ πόσους τρόπους προσάγομεν προσκύνησιν κτίσμασι;
> ἐφ' οἷς ἀναπέπαυται ὁ θεὸς ὁ μόνος ἅγιος καὶ «ἐν ἁγίοις ἀναπαυόμενος» ὡς τῇ ἁγίᾳ θεοτόκῳ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἁγίοις. Οὗτοι δέ εἰσιν οἱ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὁμοιωθέντες θεῷ ἔκ τε τῆς ἑαυτῶν προαιρέσεως καὶ τῆς θεοῦ ἐνοικήσεως καὶ συνεργίας, οἵτινες καὶ θεοὶ λέγονται ἀληθῶς, οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ θέσει, ὡς πῦρ λέγεται ὁ πεπυρακτωμένος σίδηρος, οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ θέσει καὶ μεθέξει πυρός·
>
> *What we find worshipped in Scripture, and in how many ways we show worship to creatures.*
> First, those places in which God, who alone is holy, has rested, and His resting-place in the saints [*Is.* 57, 15], as in the holy Mother of God and in all the saints. These are they who have become likenesses of God as far as possible, of their own free will, and by God's indwelling and syn-

> ergy. They are truly named gods, not by nature, but by establishment, just as red-hot iron is called fire, not by its nature, but by participation in the action of fire. (Jo. Damasc. *De Imag*. 3.33: 1–11; Kotter 1975, 137)

Here Damascene, within the context of the Iconoclastic controversy, speaks of the worship of the saints. In this connection, he specifies what it means to be a saint and in order to make his case has recourse to the notion of God-likeness, the doctrine of free will and synergy and the example of incandescent iron. Within this, Damascene uses the opposition *by nature* and *by establishment/participation*.[25]

In this passage by Damascene, there is a sort of accumulation of various lines which we have found in connection with the example of iron and fire in previous Byzantine writings. For instance, of the topics represented in this fragment, there is the theme of free will that we have met in the fragment of Basil, while Cyril applied the opposition *by nature – by participation* and the topic of participation of incandescent iron in fire serving as an illustration of imparting the properties of fire into iron. Maximus' theme of *cognition/recognition* by the "better nature" (the iron penetrated by fire is acknowledged by the properties of fire and the saint by the properties of deity which he has received) is transformed here into the topic of *naming*: the incandescent iron *is named* fire, while a godly man is *named* god (by establishment/participation).

That is, similarly to Ps.-Macarius and Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene employs the uniting potential of the example of fire and iron. However, like Maximus, he turns away from the "naive" ontologizing language used by Ps.-Macarius which refers to the unity of the conjoining natures. What he turns to, is the discourse where this unity is interpreted as a phenomenon manifested to our intellectual abilities, which supposes an indication of unity *in some respect* and rules out conflation of the unified natures (i.e. a merge of the created nature with uncreated one).

2.7 *Simeon the New Theologian*

In his 30th hymn, Symeon describes the conjunction of his soul with God in the following way:

25 The expressions *by establishment* and *by participation* are used here by Damascene in a synonymic way.

ἀπορρήτως συναφθέντα
καί μιγέντα μοι ἀμίκτως
ὡς τό πῦρ αὐτῷ σιδήρῳ
καί τό φῶς γε τῷ ὑέλῳ,
καί ἐποίησεν ὡς πῦρ με
καί ὡς φῶς ἀπέδειξέ με,
καί ἐκεῖνο ἐγενόμην,
ὅπερ ἔβλεπον πρό τούτου
καί μακρόθεν ἐθεώρουν

[He] unspeakably joined,
and mixed in me without mixing,
like the fire in the iron itself,
and He made me like a fire,
and made me like light,
and I became that
which I had seen before and had contemplated from afar
Hymn XXX, 425–433 (280–281, ed. Kambyles; transl. Griggs, 2011 slightly revised)

A little further, Symeon describes the communion in Christ's Body and Blood, as follows:

ταῦτα οὖν τά ἕν δύο
τοῦ Χριστοῦ μεταλαβόντα
καί τοῦ αἵματος πιόντα
ἀμφοτέραις ταῖς οὐσίαις
καί ταῖς φύσεσιν ὡσαύτως
ἑνωθέντα τοῦ Θεοῦ μου
γίνονται Θεός μεθέξει,
ὁμωνύμως τε καλοῦνται
τῷ ὀνόματι ἐκείνου,
οὗ οὐσιωδῶς μετέσχον.
Λέγεται οὖν πῦρ ὁ ἄνθραξ
καί ὁ σίδηρος ὁ μέλας
πυρωθείς ὡς πῦρ ὁρᾶται.

Therefore [body and soul] are one and two
partaking of Christ
and drinking his blood,

united to both essences,
and likewise, to both
natures of my God;
they become God by participation,
and they are called by the same name,
by his name;
they have participated in God's essence.[26]
And so, it is said that charcoal is fire,
and iron is black;
when it is burned, it looks like fire.
So, if appears as such,
it would also be called as such, seen as fire, it is called fire.
Hymn XXX, 478–493 (282, ed. Kambyles; transl. Griggs, 2011)

In the 44th hymn, Symeon once again addresses to the topic of penetration of fire into iron to expose the conjunction of man with God through the gifts of the Holy Spirit

Ὡς οὐδέ τό πῦρ μετέχει
τῆς σιδήρου μελανίας,
μεταδίδωσι δ' ἐκείνῳ
πάντα τά αὐτῷ προσόντα,
οὕτω καί τό Θεῖον Πνεῦμα
ἄφθαρτον ὂν ἀφθαρσίαν
καί ἀθάνατον ὑπάρχον
δίδωσιν ἀθανασίαν,
φῶς τε ἄδυτον τυχάνον
φῶς ἀποτελεῖ τούς πάντας
ἐν οἵσπερ κατασκηνώσει

Just as the fire does not partake
of the blackness of iron,
yet it gives to iron
a share of all his properties,
so also, the divine Spirit,
being incorruptible, gives incorruptibility,

26 About the theme of participation in the divine essence in Symeon the New Theologian and other Patristic authors, see Biriukov (2015).

and being immortal,
He gives immortality,
and being never setting light,
He turns everyone into light,
in which He shall pitch his tent.
Hymn XLIV, 367–377 (371, ed. Kambyles; transl. Griggs 2011)

Apart from the authors discussed so far, Symeon, talking about conjunction with God through applying the metaphor of iron and fire, speaks from the first person and thus his narrative has the most expressive existential traits. In describing his union with God, Symeon likens himself to the iron penetrated by fire and receiving its qualities, and to the glass pierced by light. It should be noted that Symeon, in the fire and iron example, is utilizing the expression μιγέντα μοι ἀμίκτως, or "mixed in me without mixing," with the use of derivatives from μίγνυμι/μίξις, and here compliance with the Stoic natural philosophical terminology takes place; where, as mentioned, the *mixture-κρᾶσις* for liquids and the *mixture-μίξις* for non-liquids were distinguished, and the latter was illustrated by the example of iron and fire.

In a conceptual way, Symeon is following here the line of Ps.-Macarius and Maximus. Like the latter, Symeon brings out the uniting potential of the example of iron and fire in order to describe his acceptance of the divine properties bestowed to him by God. With that, Symeon articulates this topic in a way that is closest to Maximus. The latter, when speaking of how the saints receive the divine properties, uses iron and fire, and air and light as examples and emphasizes the passive mode of being of a deified man, which he expresses as a deified man wishing to be recognized and determined by the divine, not his human, nature. Like Maximus, Symeon speaks of the iron made incandescent by fire along with the glass pierced by light – similar to Maximus' example of air and light – and declares the ability of recognition and naming by the better (uncreated) nature for a man who unites with God. I believe this shows the influence of Maximus on Symeon in this particular aspect.

It is remarkable that both Symeon (in *Hymn* XXX, 478–493) and Maximus (in *Amb*. VII: *PG* 91, col. 1073C–1076A), when giving the example of iron and fire, employ the same strategy. It is a strategy of *recognition* or *discernment* (almost in the scientific sense): we are able to recognize or discern the nature of fire displayed in iron through the properties revealed by incandescent iron, and, in a similar way, to discern the deified man as god (with a small letter) through the demonstrated divine features he is in possession of and which were bestowed on him by God. Or we can conclude that a human being is god (with a small letter) when he shows himself as God.

2.8 *Gregory Palamas*

The last Byzantine author to be discussed in this review is Gregory Palamas. He set out the penetration of fire into iron in his treatises *On divine energies and participation in them* and *On divine and deifying participation*. The way in which Palamas deals with this cumulates the ideas and interpretative lines represented in the previous Byzantine tradition but also reflects the specificity of Palamas' own doctrine.

In the treatise *On divine energies*, the metaphor primarily appears in the 17th chapter as included in the quotation from *C. Eun.*, PG 29b, 660 of Basil of Caesarea, which I have spoken of above (Basil assimilates the angelic powers participation in the Holy Spirit to the incandesced iron and the Spirit to the fire, which makes it incandescent and bestows the fire's properties on it). Further, the metaphor of incandesced iron occurs in the 40th chapter of the treatise in the context of the rhetoric of the deification of a human being:

> Ἡ ἐπιφαινομένη τοῖς δημιουργήμασι σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν; Ἀλλ' αὕτη μὲν ἀεὶ ἀμέθεκτός τε καὶ ἁπλῆ. Ἡ δὲ σοφία παρὰ τῶν σοφῶς συνεστηκότων μετέχεται ⟨…⟩. Σοφίαν δὲ λέγω νῦν τὴν ἐν πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ καὶ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι θεωρουμένην. ⟨…⟩ Κἄν τι τοίνυν τῶν δημιουργημάτων ὑπάρχῃ σοφόν, ἣν μὲν ἔχει σοφίαν κτίσμα, καὶ γὰρ ἀποτέλεσμα, ἧς δὲ μετέχει, καθὸ τεχνητόν, σοφίας οὐ κτίσμα, καὶ γὰρ δύναμίς ἐστι θεία συνημμένη τῷ κτίσαντι. Τῶν μέντοι τεθεωμένων τὴν μέθεξιν ἑτέραν οὖσαν καὶ διαφέρουσαν διαφερόντως τῆς τῶν κτιστῶς προηγμένων μεθέξεως, οὐκ ἐπιφαινομένην μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ διαφαινομένην ἐχόντων τὴν θείαν ἐνέργειαν καὶ δι' αὐτῶν ἐνεργοῦσαν αὖθις τὰ ἑαυτῆς ὡς δι' ὑελίνων ὑμένων ἡ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτὶς ἢ διὰ τῆς πεπυρακτωμένης ὕλης τὸ πῦρ.
>
> Is it through creatures that the wisdom of God, which reveals itself, is the divine substance? Yet the substance is unparticipated and simple, while the wisdom is participated by those who have established themselves in a wisely manner ⟨…⟩. Here I am speaking of the wisdom contemplated in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ⟨…⟩. Therefore, if any created being is wise, the wisdom it possesses is created and actually a result [of creation]; but the wisdom it participates in, as long as it is manufactured, is no creation but is actually a divine power conjoined with the Creator. At that, the participation of deified persons is different, and quite to a great degree distinct from that of [simply] created beings, for they have the divine actuality not only manifesting but clearly exposing itself through themselves and also acting in the way proper to it like a

> sunray through a glass shell or fire through incandesced material. (Greg. Palam. *De Div. Oper*. 40. 125. 8–26)[27]

Here two important lines of the Palamite discourse can be detected. The first, as a basic one for the Palamite doctrine, relates to the distinction between unparticipated substance and participated uncreated energies (powers), in which the things of the created world participate. In this way Palamas is speaking here of the uncreated divine Wisdom, in which the created beings possessing wisdom participate. This kind of participation is distinguished by Palamas from that of deified humans participating in God. Here, one more line important for the Palamite discourse emerges: the line of the hierarchy of being. As I have shown,[28] Palamas makes a distinction between two kinds of uncreated energies in God: these are the *creating* uncreated energies and the uncreated energy of *deification*. All the created beings participate in different *creating* energies depending on their place in the hierarchy of natural capabilities; while the *deifying* energy is participated, in a supernatural way by the deified people and angelic powers that are fit to participate in it, besides the natural participation in the *creating* energies. While pondering on the hierarchy of natural capabilities, Palamas makes a distinction, in descending order of commonness, of the natural participation by following kinds: by being, by life, by senses, by reason, by intellect, by wisdom and, besides, by spirit (for the angelic powers).[29] Each of the mentioned capabilities corresponds to a certain *creating* divine energy – substance-creating, life-creating, sense-creating, reason-creating, wisdom-creating, wherein the being that has the respective capabilities participates.[30] By that, following these enumeration of capabilities, the possession of every consequent natural capability, correlating with the participation in a certain divine energy, suggests the possession of previous capabilities and respective participations. Hence it should be stated that in this way the kinds of created beings – the bearers of respective kinds of natural participations – constitute a hierarchy.

Accordingly, Palamas argues in the above-cited text that there is a distinction between, on the one hand, the supreme level of natural participation in the divine for the created beings, which is the participation of (human) beings possessing wisdom in the divine wisdom-creating energy-power; and on the

27 Christou, Matsoukas, Mantzarides and Pseftika (1994).
28 Cf. Biriukov (2014) 289–291.
29 Greg. Palam. *Dial. inter orthodoxum et Barlaamitam* 46–47.
30 Greg. Palam. *Antirrh. c. Acind*. V 27.116.

other hand, participation of deified humans in the deifying divine energy. In the latter case, Palamas utilizes the imagery of blending the bodies, which had already become traditional in Byzantine theology and which went back to the Stoic natural philosophical paradigm. He brings forward the examples of the action of fire through incandescent matter and of a ray of light penetrating glass in order to exploit the implications behind these examples: in the case of deified people participating in the deifying divine energy, the energy manifests itself through them performing what is proper to it, that is, revealing itself through these persons and becoming their own energy, whereas in the case of people bestowed with the natural property of wisdom, that is, participating in the creating divine energy of the Wisdom, the latter does not expose itself *through* them but simply manifests itself in the very personal property of being wise.

In the 21st chapter of the treatise *On divine and deifying participation*, Palamas spells out the implications of Stoic natural philosophy in the context of the topic of recognition of a deified human by divine properties, as his predecessors in the Byzantine theological thought had also done,

> Ἆρ' ἔχει τις ἔτι λέγειν ὡς οὐ τῆς φυσικῆς καὶ ἀκτίστου θείας ἐνεργείας μετέχουσιν οἱ ἅγιοι πάντες, οἱ τῇ κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἐλλείψει τῆς φύσεως ἐκ μόνης τῆς χάριτος γνωριζόμενοι, καὶ μέλτῆς φύσεως ἐκ μόνης τῆς χάριτος γνωριζόμενοι, καὶ μέλλοντες ἐκ τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν τοσοῦτο διαδειχθῆναι δυνάμεως, ὁπόσον ὁ φύσει θεὸς τῆς ἡμῶν σαρκωθεὶς ἀσθενείας μετείληφεν, ἀντιμετρουμένης, ὡς οἶδεν αὐτός, τῇ αὐτοῦ κενώσει τῆς τῶν χάριτι σωζομένων θεώσεως; ⟨...⟩ Ὅλους εἰσδύντας εἰς ἑαυτὸν προσεμένῳ καὶ μεταδόντι τῆς οἰκείας δόξης τε καὶ λαμπρότητος, ὡς μηδόλως ἐξ ἑαυτῶν γνωρίζεσθαι δύνασθαι, καθάπερ καθαρὸς ἀὴρ διόλου πεφωτισμένος φωτί, μᾶλλον δὲ καθάπερ λογικὸς χρυσὸς ἀκίβδηλος, ἐκπεπυρακτωμένος ἀΰλῳ τε καὶ θείῳ πυρί.
>
> Can anyone still say that the saints do *not* partake of the natural and uncreated divine activity? I mean those who come to know by grace alone the defect of their nature in the will, and who then receive of this power, in itself, to the same degree that God shared in the weakness of our nature when he was made flesh. Weakness he took, as he knew, by his self-emptying, in exchange for the deification of those who are saved by grace. ⟨...⟩ It is through him that they [the saints] enter wholly into him who welcomes them and imparts a share of his own glory and brilliance, which they are utterly unable to discover by themselves. They are like pure air lit up altogether by light; or, rather, like abstracted, unadul-

> terated gold, tried in the furnace by the immaterial and divine fire. (Greg. Palam. *De Particip*. 21. 155.20–156.7)[31]

Like Maximus the Confessor, Gregory Palamas here reflects on the recognizability of a holy person not through his human but through his divine properties, which he acquires when conjoining with the divinity. Palamas, in the same way as Maximus, applies the metaphors of thorough penetration of air by light with the preservation of its properties in this process and the image of iron incandescent by fire, both going back to the natural philosophy of the Stoics. As a whole, Palamas is relying here on Maximus' teaching of the unique action of God and the saints, represented in *Chapters on Theology and the Economy*, 2.90: *PG* 90, col. 1168C, of the latter, of which he cites an excerpt at the end of the passage that concludes the chapter. Yet the very issue of the recognition (identification) of the saints not by their human but by their divine properties in exemplifications of the air penetrated by light and the incandescent iron is evidently borrowed from Maximus' *Ambigua*, 10: *PG* 91, col. 1137B11–C6, which I have discussed above. Yet unlike Maximus, Palamas makes explicit the principle of *tantum quantum* (commonly interpreted in the Byzantine theology as "inasmuch as God became a human, the human becomes God"), a move that we have already encountered in connection with the exposition of the fire-iron metaphor by Ps.-Macarius. In Palamas's text, this principle is employed im such a way that a deified person should be recognized by the divine grace that manifests himself in him commensurately to the degree that God, having lessened himself, became a human by incarnation (that is, perfectly).

3 Conclusion

Through the example of the penetration of fire into iron I have considered the ways, in which the Stoic natural philosophical paradigm of total blending was naturalized by the Early Christian and Byzantine theologians who wished to describe the penetration of the divine into the created and the conjunction of the created with the divine, with the condition that the created does not dissolve in the divine but remains within its own nature while being penetrated by the properties of deity. The character of this paradigm carries the presence of distinctive and uniting potentials within itself because it presupposes the interaction of two natures remaining different but uniting in a certain respect.

31 Christou, Matsoukas, Mantzarides and Pseftika (1994); transl. Anderson (2018).

Like some other philosophical topics of great importance tied to theological intuitions, it seems to have first appeared in the writings of Origen, who spoke of the conjunction of Christ's soul with God through the metaphor of the penetration of fire into iron. The further development of this by the Byzantine theologians comprised two principal lines, already adumbrated in Origen: these are the Christological line and the line of *theôsis*. In the present article, I have been interested mostly in the latter, along with the exposition of this topic within one more line – one can call it "dogmatizing," – which is also likely to have been instigated by Origen. It uses the example of iron and fire in order to clarify the distinctions in the modes of existence for the created and the divine (in the course of polemics about the nature of the Holy Spirit; in the present article, I examined this line as represented by the Cappadocians and Cyril of Alexandria). Respectively, this dogmatizing line has made real the distinctive potential of the fire and iron example. In turn, the line of *theôsis* brought out the uniting potential of the metaphor (as we noticed that in the Macarian corpus, in the texts of Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas).

The texts I have discussed testify that this line developed from the more "naive" and ontologizing discourse of Ps.-Macarius to the discourse where the unity is spoken of as a phenomenon revealed for intellectual abilities, which suggests an indication of unity *in a certain respect* and preserves from interpreting this unity as a merger of the human nature with the divine one. For the latter, one can distinguish the strategy of *cognition*/*recognition*, which Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas adhered to. According to this strategy, we can discern the nature of fire revealed in iron through the properties displayed by incandescent iron, and, in the same way, we can conclude that a human being is god (with a small letter) insofar as he manifests himself as God, that is, manifests the divine features.

The development of this discourse manifests itself in a clarifying connotation, explicated and revealed by Gregory Palamas in examples, dating back to Stoic natural philosophy. Using the examples of the action of fire through incandescent matter and a ray of light penetrating through glass, he illustrates that in the case of the deified people who participated in the deifying divine energy, this energy, becomes their own, manifests itself through them, synergistically spreading further. Palamas contrasts this situation with the action in human beings of creating divine energies (to which all created beings participate in by their natural abilities), which only manifest themselves in the beings participating in them, not manifesting through them.

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